MOTHER OF KINGS

NORVAL RICHARDSON

Charles L. Klufas.

Christmas 1928

from Mother

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Maria Letizia Ramolino Buonaparte.

From the painting by Gérard.

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BY

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BOOK I

I

A DUOMO tower of pale yellow stucco smiling down upon a mass of tiled roofs; fragments of gray walls—almost cyclopean rocks—frowning ominously; a Genoese fortress, rising prepotently against imminent attacks of pirates; a climbing, congested, defensive town of stone and plaster houses; pleasantly shaded streets wandering up and down and reaching varying levels by means of steps and winding paths; a background of ragged, harsh, dramatic mountains towering up into a sky of radiant golden light; a foreground of sandy beach that dazzled with its whiteness when it touched the incredibly blue Mediterranean; the whole swept and cleansed and refreshed by a continual breeze heavily scented by the biting perfume of eucalyptus, wild thyme, cedar, myrtle, cystus and the heavy fragrance of flowers:—Ajaccio in the seventh decade of the eighteenth century.

In one of the narrowest, darkest streets, a plain little house of stucco made no effort to rise above its neighbors. It appeared contented to remain just what it was—simple with quiet dignity, happy to be one of many, firm and solid with its foundations deeply planted in the soil of Corsica. Only the upper floor glowed in the early morning sun—so soon too hot to be comfortable. A few acacia trees threw a grateful green shadow upon the white façade. Passing hurriedly, one might have thought the house deserted, so tightly closed and barred were the shutters; and yet within, even at the early morning hour—the Duomo clock had just hammered out five resounding strokes—there were already preparations for the day going on. Along a dark corridor a woman moved carefully, almost suspiciously. She was evidently listening to find out if any one were stirring behind

the closed door at which she stopped. Her dark, hot eyes glowed with intent interest. Her warm, darkly burned skin was flushed with excitement.

"Signorina! Signorina Tizia! Signorina Letizia!"

Saveria put her lips to the keyhole; sent the words whispering through the opening; waited. She was sure the Signorina was in her room; she could hear a slight noise of some one moving about within there; but she got no response. Again she tried a whisper, this time more penetrating; and was awarded with success.

"What is it, Saveria? I am dressing."

"For the mass?"

"But of course."

"I must speak to you, Signorina."

"Va bene. What is it?"

"Are you going to wear your shawl—the one with the long fringe?"

"No. This is not a festa."

Saveria smiled to herself. "It is the month of the Madonna. Every day is a festa. To-day—above all." Saveria's smile broadened.

Silence from the room; then a question: "Why to-day—above all, Saveria?"

"I will tell the Signorina if she will wear the shawl with the long fringe; not otherwise."

"Benissimo, cara mia," came the slow response; not with curiosity, nor with any suggestion of excitement; more in the tone of one humoring a child.

Saveria waited at the door, her dark eyes fairly flashing, her ears keenly alert for any noises within the room she could not see. When the door finally opened and the young girl stood before her, her glance shot over her with swift inspection. She noted the warm chestnut hair, the broad,

gentle forehead, the long, well-moulded nose, the sweetly curving and yet extremely firm lips, and—most of all—the lovely, deep, glowing brown eyes, eyes that could flash in the most alarming way and yet could be so gentle and warmly affectionate that one was wondering all the time what was actually behind them. Saveria nodded approvingly, especially when her glance reached the shawl. Its wine-colored background, on which glowed vivid pink flowers, apparently satisfied her somewhat primitive demand for decoration; and surely it was an effective setting for the warm, glowing face that rose above it.

"Cara Saveria," the girl murmured softly, flushing a little under the unmistakable nod of approval. "Why did you want me to wear the shawl? Don't you know every one will be asking for a reason! Just wait and see. There will be a veritable scandal in the Piazza before we return from mass."

Saveria nodded again. "And rightly so."

"But what are you talking about?"

"Wait. Pazienza. I will tell you when we are safely out of the house."

They went quietly down the steps, hand in hand, slipped out of the front door—Saveria closed it softly, as though they were leaving on some mysterious mission—and stopped a moment facing the small square of acacia-trees. The golden sunlight, after the shadows of the house, made them narrow their eyes protectively. A fresh breeze, with its salt tang straight from the Mediterranean, caressed them gently and brought with it all sorts of suggestions of incredible sweetness.

The young girl clasped her hands. "After mass, let's go out of the paese—way out, up to the Prés d'Alata—and gather some lilies. I want fresh ones to place before my picture of the Madonna."

"Perhaps. We'll see. If there's time."

"Of course there's time. A whole hour."

Saveria drew her along. "We'll see," she repeated mysteriously.

They passed along the narrow street until they came into the Piazza. Here Saveria drew the young girl closer to her with a protective gesture. They were now passing the trattoria. For a young girl to pass there on a Sunday morning was something like running the gauntlet. Already the tables had overflowed to the street and were surrounded by a crowd of men; men of the town in holiday attire of velvet breeches and bright-colored sashes; men from the mountains, shepherds, with their legs wrapped about in woolen leggings and their heads tied with gay scarfs; men of more sinister mien, perhaps brigands, flaunting their evil deeds before more conservative neighbors and trying to appear as if they were city-bred—all of them sipping wine and smoking and playing cards; all of them with wandering, smouldering hot eyes that would surely not miss seeing a pretty girl on her way to mass, even though her eyes were so downcast that one might not guess what color they were.

Safely beyond the too-inquiring, too-admiring fire, Saveria felt the little hand in hers holding her back. They had reached the meeting of two streets from which the view of harbor and sea and mountains could be seen between congested roofs. The girl must stop for a moment and gaze quietly upon the drama of the scene. She could never pass the spot without stopping. And as she looked so intently before her, her eyes grew deeper in tint, they fairly glowed—as eyes do when they look upon something they love.

Again Saveria tugged at her hand. "We are going to be late, Signorina."

They reached the Duomo. Its tall tower of yellow plaster glittered in the golden light. From its radiant height a deep-

toned bell was being hammered into life. They were among friends now. Smiles and nods and greetings; kisses from her friend Panoria; nudges from several gossips who were gathered near the portal.

"Look! La Ramolino is wearing her fringed shawl."

"Haven't you heard?"

"No. What?"

"The arciprete called on her mother last night."

"But that is nothing. He was in our house last week."

"Yes—but that was before his nephew returned; his nephew just back from Pisa. He is here now. He is going to live with his uncle—the archdeacon Luciano."

The young girl did not hear the comments. Her dark eyes were now directed toward the entrance to the church. The glow in them was very soft and gentle. The mystery of the dark interior seemed already to have reached her thoughts and held them. She withdrew her hand from Saveria's and walked ahead, slowly, thoughtfully, with an unconscious dignity that was impressive. She bowed reverently before the altar, made the sign of the cross, slipped down to her knees before one of the simple benches. Saveria followed close beside her but not nearly so reverently. She could not keep her head bowed when there were so many beautiful candles burning on the altar. The light was like something from heaven. And the statue of the Holy Mother surrounded by masses of lilies! And the Archbishop in his wonderful robes! She had seen Maria Illira washing the lace of his surplice only yesterday—in the brook beyond the priest's house. She alone was granted such an honor. It was all so beautiful and thrilling that Saveria almost forgot her preoccupation; almost—not quite. Its memory came back with such a shock that she clutched the small hand beside her.

"He is coming to dinner at the house to-day!"

Saveria waited for an excited "Who?" but received only

a reproving pressure of the hand. She sighed, crossed herself, and bowed her head with assumed devotion. She supposed she would have to wait a little while longer. But once the mass was finished——

Now they were out in the sunlight again. More greetings; more nudges; more questioning glances at the fringed shawl. Then the quiet street that led back to the house; a longer way, but safely avoiding the Piazza and the trattoria. Perhaps silence might be a good ruse. The result was satisfactory. In the shadows of the old via del Borgo a smooth little hand was slipped into the rough one.

"Now, Saveria. Why did you make me wear the fringed shawl? Who is coming to dine at the house to-day?"

You can keep a mountain torrent stemmed for a little while; but when the dam bursts the flood is overwhelming. So were Saveria's words. They gushed forth like a cataract —a cataract that had its source far up in the mountains. She must begin at the beginning; which was the evening before. She was in the kitchen helping the Signora Fesch make pasta. A knock had sounded on the door. She had gone to open it. Who should be there but the arciprete himself, the most venerable and excellent Signor Luciano. Would the Signora see him on a most important mission! She had shown him into the salone and thrown the windows wide open. Any one passing could have looked up and seen him there. Some had; hence the rumors on the Piazza that morning. The Signora had talked with him for an hour or more—perhaps two hours. And, yes—she admitted it—she had listened at the door. An old servant—at least old in service—should know every important matter that concerned the padrona. Sant' Antonio mio—it was important! The most reverend Signor Luciano had begun by talking of his nephew who had just come back from the University of Pisa to live with him. His name was Carlo—Signorino

Carlo; he was to inherit everything the arciprete owned; the tall, three-storied house in town; and those beautiful vineyards on the mountainside three miles away. He had been a hard student at Pisa; he had been given a degree; now he had returned to his uncle's house and was going to practise law. But all this was nothing at all—assolutamente niente—until he mentioned the Signorina's name. Then—Dio mio!—she began to understand; especially when the Signora said that her daughter had some property, not much, in fact very little—the vineyard of La Sposata and some land worth seven thousand francs. The arciprete said this was not bad. Then he said that Signor Carlo and his wife would live with him in his big house. They would have an entire floor to themselves. He would keep one for himself. The top floor was already let to the Pozzo di Borgo family.

The young girl listened intently. Her eyes grew wider and wider as the torrent of words splashed about her. "But, Saveria, are you sure they were talking of me!"

"Madonna mia, do you think I could make all that up! Not only were they talking of you, Signorina, but when the arciprete left I heard the Signora ask him to come to dinner to-day"—here Saveria stopped abruptly and turned about to make her words more effective—"and she told him to bring his nephew with him." She resumed her walk. "Haven't we been making pasta fatta in casa all night! You saw us. And this morning I rose before dawn to prepare the most beautiful sauce of tomatoes. Then to the Piazza to buy raw ham and melons, a fat fowl to be roasted, some of those large purple figs from Solario, a fiascone of the golden wine and one of the red. That reminds me, I must stop at Maria Illira's house for some broccio cheese. Did I not tell you it was to be a festa, Signorina!"

The young girl waited outside while Saveria disappeared

in a house in search of the promised cheese. When she returned, the cheese wrapped in a cabbage-leaf, they did not go straight home. As if in silent agreement, they directed their steps toward the Parata.

"You say his name is Carlo, Saveria?"

"Si, Signorina—Carlo Maria di Buonaparte. They call him Conte di Buonaparte."

"And he has been at Pisa and taken a lawyer's degree."

"Si, Signorina."

The young girl clasped her hands tightly. "Then—I do not wish to meet him. I am afraid to."

"Of what, bambina?"

"What could I talk to him about! He would find me stupid. I do not read very well. As for writing— No. He would make me ashamed of myself."

Saveria's frown was threatening. "What real man bothers about things like that! What does he care if you can read or write! Santa Pazienza! It would mean only expense to him. Men want women that know how to cook and wash and bear them sons. If she has hair like ripe chestnuts—and warm brown eyes—and a body like the lilies of the Madonna—why bother about learning!"

"But she must at least have a fortune. I shall bring my husband so little. My father left my mother with only the house. My stepfather left her only responsibilities—two more to feed and care for." She shook her head sadly. "But why are we talking of all this! I shall never have an offer of marriage. I am already past thirteen and no one has asked for me yet."

Again Saveria stopped and swung about. "But I tell you I heard the arciprete ask for your hand for his nephew. That is why they are coming to dinner to-day. It is for you both to meet. It is all arranged."

The young girl's eyes quickened. "What is he like, Saveria?"

She had not seen him. But she had been told that he was as beautiful as an angel. Saveria's eyes began to glow with the poetic fire. It was said that he had hair like the mountains about Corte when the sun kissed them. Eyes gray as the sea when the sirocco blows. She tried an even more impressive flight. Some one had said that he was exactly like the king of France. What was he called—Luigi Quindice, she knew—but in French?

"Louis Quinze."

"And they say he is brave as a lion; that he is going to join the patriot Paoli and help free us from the filthy Genoese. He is a man a woman can be proud of."

"Ah, yes—but his wife must be a woman he can be proud of too."

"Già! And do they not call you the most beautiful of all the Corsican giovinotte! What more could he want!" Here she decided to try a disturbing note. "But who can say what he will think? I've heard there was a very rich Signorina Alberti in Pisa who fell in love with him and wanted to marry him. But he would not look at her. 'Tis that way with men that women love."

It was now time to be returning to the house. They hurried back through winding, steep streets; and arrived breathless and warm. Saveria disappeared within. Her charge remained a few moments under the acacias, waiting for her heart to stop beating so violently. Through the open windows she could hear voices; one deep and resonant —the Monsignore's. She knew it well. The other—low and suave and somehow distinguished; a voice that one who had studied at Pisa's university would naturally possess. Her eyes clouded. It was all so hopeless. What had she to give a man like that! He would hardly deign to notice her. For a few moments she thought of running off into the mountains and remaining there until late that evening—until he had

gone. But of course she could not do that. She was no longer a child. And besides— She listened again. She liked the sound of his voice. It was like music—music in the Duomo —low, deep, thrilling. Perhaps——

She passed through the door and went up the steps, clutching the fringed shawl and pulling it closely about her. In the dim room she could just make out the Monsignore in his purple robes. She went directly to him, bowed over his hand and kissed it. Then she turned and found herself facing a tall young man who was smiling down at her. Hair like the mountains about Corte when the sun kisses them. Eyes gray as the sea when the sirocco blows. Saveria had described him perfectly.

She opened the door cautiously. In spite of her precautions the latch made a little squeak—one of those subtle noises that are more disturbing than the boom of cannon. But no answering sound came from the dark corridor. She closed the door behind her and tiptoed along. However, all is not well until it ends well. She met Saveria at the foot of the stairs, coming in from the garden with her skirt held up full of vegetables.

"The Signorina is up very early."

She put her hand to her throat and made a desperate effort to appear calm. If she could only breathe a little more quietly! If her face would not flush so vividly! She knew she was blushing in the most convicting way.

"Si, Saveria—I looked out of the window. The morning is so beautiful. I thought—I thought I'd go for a little walk."

"Without coffee, Signorina!"

She nodded. Coffee! How absurd! Who wanted coffee on a morning like that—the most beautiful morning in the world. "You will not tell my mother, Saveria!" She pressed

the rough hand; their eyes met understandingly. "Please, Saveria."

Saveria looked at her, her laughing eyes gazing into the serious brown ones; then she nodded, more to herself, perhaps a little sadly. Yes, the morning was beautiful; most mornings in Ajaccio were; but that had nothing to do with making this morning so exceptional. Under similar circumstances it would have been just as beautiful in far-off Italy or any of those places people bragged so of having seen. Saveria was still young enough to be sympathetic. If it had not been for the call of those far-off places she might now have been a signora herself. But Pietro had the lust for roving. He had sailed away three years ago; to Napoli, he had said; and he had never come back. Saveria sighed.

"I will say nothing to the Signora—nothing; not even that I saw the Signorino Carlo just now pass the house and go toward the sea — down the steps that lead to the Parata."

"Already! But I told him—" Again hand went to thróat and flush deepened. "I must hurry. If they ask for me, tell them—tell them something."

"That the Signorina has gone to mass?"

"No—no! That would be wicked. I would have to confess that to the prete. Something else. Anything, Saveria."

She hurried out into the street and made directly toward the road that led down, down to the sea. Once beyond the houses, she began to run. But it was not such easy going. The road was filled with carts that morning. Peasants were coming into town with produce to sell in the market. They were on foot, in carts, driving pigs before them, carrying bags of chestnuts on their backs. What a frightful clatter they made—crying aloud, snapping whips, jangling bells! And how the donkeys brayed and the pigs squealed. She felt that she would never pass them.

At last the white shimmer of almond groves was before her. They made her think of bridal flowers—the white against the silver green of olives. Marriage flowers. The delicate scent of mimosa reached her now. She lifted her head to breathe in the sweet perfume. There, not far now, down the road, was the shrine—Our Lady of the Almond Blossoms—where he had said he would be waiting for her. At last she was there. But alone! Her heart throbbed violently. Was she late! Or had he grown impatient and strolled down to the beach! On the whole she was rather glad. A few minutes would give her time to regain some semblance of calm—if she were ever going to be calm again. She sank down before the shrine and gazed up at the Madonna. She lifted her hands, clasped them, held them out beseechingly. Her lips moved silently. Only her heart spoke; but oh, so eloquently. Madonna Santissima—let it be true! Let him love me! Let me be worthy of him!

Now he was coming toward her. A few moments more and he would be standing before her, his gray eyes—like the sea when the sirocco blows over it—smiling into hers. How they had frightened her that first day! They had made her wish to run away and hide; then run back to see them again. They frightened her and made her happy, all at the same time. She would not look toward him any longer. She would only listen to the sound of his footsteps. Even when she felt herself caught in his arms and held tightly, she would not look up; at least not for a long, long time. When she did, she knew that she was no longer afraid of meeting his eyes. Her hands reached up and clung to his coat. His face came nearer and nearer. She closed her eyes—for she knew what was coming. Their lips were going to meet for the first time. They were going to make their mutual declaration of love. She clung to him almost violently; she had to—otherwise she would have fallen from so much trembling. Then——

"Letizia—my beloved. Who was it gave you such a lovely name — such a splendid name! Do you know what it means?"

She shook her head shyly. He knew so much; she knew so little. What could he possibly find in her name to mean anything!

"It means gaiety—joy—happiness. In the days of ancient Rome they had a deity called Letizia—a goddess always represented with an anchor in her hand, a crown on her head, a smile on her lips. Think how perfectly that suits you. The anchor is for me," he laughed gaily. "It is already about my heart. The smile is for me, too. And the crown"—his eyes glowed deeply—"that will be for me to give you one of these days. With such a name—and with mine—" He stopped and smiled down into her eyes. "I wonder if you know what my name means."

She flushed and nodded, this time with pleasure. "My mother told me. Buonaparte means devoted to a good cause —the good part."

They were walking along the shore now; and he was talking as she had never heard any one talk before—such beautiful words, so many of them, such big ones, many very hard to understand—telling her of his early days in Corte, his life in Pisa, and then finally of his present plans. "Zio Luciano thinks we should wait. But why? You are almost fourteen. I am already eighteen. If we love each other why should we not marry at once. I have no intention of going to Corte without you."

"To Corte! You are going away from Ajaccio!"

"I must go there. General Paoli wants me. He needs the help of all real patriots. If Genoa sells our island to France we are going to fight for our freedom. Paoli is to lead us."

She drew her hand from his. "That means leaving here, leaving Mammina—little Peppino—Saveria!"

"But Corte is not so bad. It is a lovely old town, high in the mountains, a fortress. We are going to make it the capital of the island—when we are a free people. Paoli has already found a house for me, one that was lived in by Gaffori when he fought against the Genoese. You will love it. Think of it—the wife of a patriot!"

"I know nothing of such things. I shall be lost there—among strangers."

He drew her back to him. "Lost with me—as my wife." He had a way of laughing off her sadness. "You are going to be the great lady of Corte; the beautiful wife of their leader; perhaps—who knows!—some day you may be the wife of the governor of the island. Will not that be worth something?"

"I only want to be your wife."

"Then you must be ambitious with me. We must go up and up. We must never be contented with a simple life here—among contadini who have never seen anything but these mountains and that sea. There are wonderful lands beyond that placid horizon."

She glanced toward the sea and shook her head. "I shall never see them. I do not wish to. It is beautiful enough here. Why should we ever leave!"

Again he laughed. "Wait! I am going to tell you of everything that lies beyond this little island. I am going to fire your imagination. You are too lovely to live here always—your beauty lost among these peasants. You were born for greater things. Don't forget the crown the Roman goddess wore."

The sun was high now. It was growing hot. And it was time, she said, that she should be returning to the house. There was so much to do that day. What? Oh, she must help Saveria with the washing; she must aid her mother in the kitchen; and there was little Peppino — her half-brother—to be watched over while he played in the garden.

Her days were quite filled. They walked slowly toward the town.

"But—cara mia—you will give me your promise. We shall not listen to Zio Luciano—even if he is a monsignore. We shall be married at once!"

She nodded. Of course she would do whatever he said. Already she had placed her fate in his hands. She had done that the first day she saw him. But her words were not gay; nor her lips smiling. The happiness of the morning had somehow diminished. Loving was not all joy. It meant going away from those one had always lived with. It meant forsaking so much that had become a part of one's life.

Saveria was watching and listening for her return. When slow steps, dragging steps, sounded in the hall she rushed out from the kitchen, her eyes flashing with desire of news. News conveyed by a solemn face was the last thing she expected.

"But, Signorina—you are not smiling!"

"Saveria, he is going to take me away—far away—away over the mountains to Corte. It is the whole of two days from here."

Saveria opened wide her robust arms. Her deep bosom had often before proved a comforting haven for the chestnut head. "Two days! That is nothing. We all have to go away with them. Only think how much better that is—to go with them—than to have them go without us. Is it not so?"

"He says I am to be a patriot's wife; that we are to go far away; to see the world. It all sounds so frightening. What shall I do, Saveria? I do not know. Tell me."

Saveria pretended to think this over very seriously; and yet all the time there was laughter in her sparkling eyes. "It is a serious matter, Signorina; tanto serio. And there is only one way to know what is right to do."

"One way! But tell me."

"Does the Signorina want to go?"

"I'd die if I was left behind, Saveria."

Saveria restrained the laughter no longer. She patted the chestnut head and pressed it closer to her deep bosom. "Va bene. Then go. And if the Signora Fesch will let me—I will go with you."

The horses were ready to carry them across the mountains on the two-day journey to Corte. A cart was already loaded with her wedding-chest packed with linen; and there were baskets of personal belongings, dresses, her picture of the Madonna, and of course the fringed shawl. Two white oxen were to drag the luggage over the mountain passes under the watchful eyes of Saveria, who had been permitted to follow her into the new life. The whole family had gathered before the house; her mother, silent and sad; little Peppino Fesch, her half-brother, sobbing over the separation from his beloved big sister; Monsignor Luciano with the gentle, distinguished face—whom Carlo so much resembled; and several friends, among them Panoria, who was also to be married soon and go even farther away to live in France as Madame Permon. Every one was making an effort to appear gay and merry; all except little Peppino. He clung to his sister's skirts and begged to be taken with her.

"Sorellina mia!" he wailed. "You promised never to leave me!"

She held him to her. He was the one she hated most to part with. She had cared for him ever since he was a baby. Seeing her so tender with him the people of the paese had called her the little mother—which she was. Even as a child the maternal instinct had been dominant.

Her mother drew the little boy away and counselled her not to be sad. "What will your husband think of you! No man wants a weeping bride."

She tried to force back the tears; she managed to smile as she was lifted to the horse; she waved her hand bravely in parting; then she turned away from the dear scene and never once looked back.

Soon the town was left behind; Solario was passed; the shrine of the Madonna of the Almond Blossoms appeared along their path and then was gone; and before them stretched stark, towering mountains. The June morning did its best to make the journey beautiful. The sun was gilding the sloping fields of grain, the silver olive groves, the orange plantations; it made the trees sparkle with freshly varnished leaves; it made the mimosa blossoms glitter and throw out a heavenly perfume. Beside her rode the one for whom she had forsaken everything. She looked at him timidly from time to time. When he reached for her hand she placed hers in his and smiled bravely.

"Carissima," he said. "Don't look back. Only look ahead. Think of all that lies before us."

She tried to obey him. She straightened her shoulders and looked steadily ahead. Of course she must do what he said. She was his wife now; she must go wherever he went; she must do what he did; that was, as her mother had said, her fate—a fate that had not been forced on her. They had left the decision to her. She had chosen freely—because she loved him. But love was proving a harsh master. It gave so much, yet took away so much.

Still forcing herself to look ahead, her glance finally rested, a day later, on the town he had chosen for their home. How gloomy and sinister it looked, perched there high among lofty mountains! It appeared still to be the fortress Moorish kings had chosen for their defense. It seemed made up only of thick walls, massive gates, barred windows. No matter if fertile plains swam beneath it; and rushing rivers flowed on either side; and the whole island seemed to

spread away from it—the first sight of it was not gay. Even when they had reached the gates of the town and were met by a party of horsemen, among them the famous General Paoli himself, their welcome did not completely obliterate the feeling that she was being carried into a prison.

"Benvenuti!" cried the General, doffing his cap and bowing over her hand. His hot, searching eyes, though smiling, were full of keen inspection. "Signor Carlo did not prepare us for such a beauty. I see now that our cause will be successful. We cannot fail with such inspiration in our midst."

Her glance fell before the florid compliments. She could find no words that seemed suitable.

"We now have an excuse to be cheerful," the General continued. "We shall give a banquet at once—and a ball. We must make you forget all about Ajaccio. In the evenings I shall insist that you play reversi with me. You must see if you can beat me, Signora. No one yet has. Perhaps that honor has been reserved for Madama Buonaparte."

This time she smiled contentedly. At least there was something she could do. She and her mother had spent many long evenings at the game. And now she was to play it with the great Paoli.

They were conducted to the house already found for them —a dismal building which still showed traces of a siege. One room seemed barely livable. Here she was left alone while her husband rushed out to meet his friends. He must call on the leading citizens at once, he explained. He hoped they would accept him as one of them. They would, he felt sure, as soon as he had had a chance to impress them with his burning patriotism. It was here Saveria found her late that evening when she and the white oxen and the wedding-chest arrived.

"A house! I call it a prison—a noisome pit! What a place to bring a bride! No wonder I find you sad, Signorina—no, Signora." Saveria's staccato tones ended in a hearty laugh

as she took the dismal bride by the shoulders and looked deep into her eyes. "Signora—Dio mio! To think that you should be a wife before me!" Here she pretended to grow very solemn. "But tell me, Signora, is it worth it? Have I missed the greatest joy the Holy Mother bestows upon us? But do not answer now. Later on you can tell me. Let's begin on this filthy hole and clean it. It will take weeks to make it respectable."

And so hard did they work, unpacking, scrubbing the cold tiled pavements, cleaning the smoke grimed walls, building a fire in the great oven, spreading the carpet which the Signora Fesch had woven with her own hands, that, when the gay bridegroom returned, he was met in the soft glow of candles by his smiling, flushed, very tired young wife who, in honor of the occasion—and in obedience to Saveria's suggestion—wore the wine-colored shawl with the long fringe.

"What a treasure you are, cara mia. You are a glowing example of what marriage means. See what you have already done for me!—transformed this prison into a fairy palace."

She glowed under his praise; and rushed off to fetch a bowl of steaming maccheroni from the kitchen. Placing it between them, she sat down and watched him with increasing pleasure as he gave evidence of his appreciation of her cooking.

"It is all wonderful!" he went on enthusiastically. "And do you know what they have done! They have already made me a member of their council. And Paoli told me that I am to be his secretary. Later on he is going to give me several important commissions. Our fortune is made, Letizia. We have begun to soar."

The ball given by General Paoli in honor of Signora Letizia Buonaparte was a splendid affair. She had never at-

tended such a gathering. There must have been thousands of candles on the walls, on the tables, and blazing torches at the entrance. And there was a huge tapestry in the great hall. It filled one end of the long room. And the people! At first she was too shy to respond to all their kind words; then, warmed by glances of admiration—most of all those of her husband who led her so proudly from group to group —she began to feel that she was among friends. They called her beautiful. Could it be true! But no, it was impossible, among all these great ladies, wives of soldiers who followed their husbands on the campaigns for liberating the island, women whose eyes and figures and gestures were so assured and, to her, full of elegance. She watched them with absorbed interest. Was she really one of them! She prayed silently to the Madonna to make her equal to the position thrust upon her.

"We must entertain them in our house," Carlo had said, when weeks had passed and they had been received and fêted in all the big houses of the town. "We must let them see that we can return hospitality."

Saveria was consulted.

"How much money has he given you, Signora?"

"Alas, Saveria—very little. He tells me he is poor. Riches will come later. We must do our best."

Saveria agreed that it was all well enough doing their best; but money was necessary. In Ajaccio they had bartered in kind—a sack of chestnuts for two sacks of flour, a bote of wine for so many kilos of maccheroni, a fiascone of olive-oil for sugar and coffee; there it was easy enough. But here in Corte they must pay in silver for what they bought. How else, in the name of the Blessed Virgin, could they buy food for great dinners! They began to plan economies. Together they did the housework, the washing; they planted a vegetable garden; they raised pigs and chickens;

they argued over prices and considered everything spent a sinful waste. Those mountain brigands—Saveria considered them nothing else—given a chance would steal the eyes out of one's head. She was going to tell them what she thought of them.

"No, no, Saveria! That would offend them. They are his followers. He is going to lead them into the war of liberation. Have you not heard? The Genoese are going to sell us to France—to Louis Quinze. That would mean that we would have to be French. We will not submit to that. We are going to fight for our liberty. Corsica is to be a free country."

Her enthusiasm for the cause had been fired by constant discussion of the subject. At the General's house nothing else was ever mentioned. Even when she played reversi with him—and beat him every time—the game would be continually interrupted by some long military argument. Tales of the struggle and the heroes of Corsica were on every one's lips. She listened thirstily to the stories of the adventures of both men and women, especially the women—for she was determined to be as worthy of her husband as they were of theirs. Especially thrilling were the tales told her by the widow of an old patriot. They were of the time of Gaffori, whose roof was now sheltering her. She could still see the blackened walls within which the Genoese, having driven Gaffori from his own home, had taken refuge. They had captured his little boy and were holding him as hostage. Counter-attacking, Gaffori had seen the ruse they were employing. They had tied his son in a breach in the walls, hoping thus to discourage attack. But he had not hesitated a moment. Leading the assault, he had called back to his men: "Follow me. Continue firing. I am a Corsican patriot before I am a father!" And his wife, equally brave, following him with: "Let all our children perish in order that our

country may be saved!" This same wife, later, surrounded by the Genoese and with only a small band left to protect her, had retreated to their crumbling refuge and, with blazing torch, stood beside a barrel of powder. "When all hope is gone, we will die rather than be taken prisoner." No wonder the thrilling narratives inflamed her imagination; made her restless for the time to come when she could follow her husband into similar adventures.

"Are you going with us, Signora, when we start out to face the French?" Paoli asked her.

Her gentle brown eyes flashed. "I shall go with Carlo everywhere—even into battle."

Paoli nodded approval. "We'll need you after we have spent long days of fighting. Nothing is more cheering to soldiers than the inspiration of a beautiful signora."

But before the days of real fighting had begun, a great event had come into her life. Her first-born, a son, had scouted all thoughts of battles.

"The most beautiful bambino in the world," Saveria asserted loyally. "Is it not so, Signor Carlo?"

The proud father nodded and stared down at the pink, round face that appeared healthy enough in spite of insistent cries.

"What shall we call him, Carlo?" asked the mother.

Carlo grew reflective. He thought of his own father, whom he had known so slightly, who had died when he was a boy; then of his uncle who had taken his father's place. It was hard to make a choice. He left the decision to Letizia.

"Then for your father. I love the name Giuseppe. It is my little half-brother's name."

"My father used the French name, Joseph."

Letizia drew the baby closer to her breast. "Then—Joseph when you speak to him; Giuseppe—Peppino—when I call him."

The days were happy now; even economies could not rob them of their joy. There was a great deal to do, but it was all a labor of love. Peppino had changed the whole world. He seemed to be what she had always been waiting for—a little being that would call her Mammina, that would demand all her time, all her attention, everything that she was so willing and ready to give. For a whole year the stories of battles recounted to her by her husband, who was now in active service, seemed of little importance. Her place was by the hearth, knitting, sewing, caring for the baby.

"Paoli is planning to renew his attacks upon the French," Carlo confided to her when Giuseppe had just passed his first year. "This will likely be our last stand for freedom. If we do not succeed this time Corsica will be lost forever. We shall only be a French colony."

This stirred her out of the somnolence of domestic happiness. Old traditions were awakened. She had been brought up on tales of hardships endured by her ancestors. Was she going to let herself sink into a life of peaceful drudgery! Never. "If there is any strength in me, Carlo, it was given me by Corsica. This time I shall go with you."

"But, piccola mammina, you told me——"

" 'Tis nothing. Women before me have carried their unborn children into battle. It will not harm him. It will do him good. Perhaps—who knows—it may make a better soldier of him."

Nothing would deter her. Saveria called the plan mad. A woman already big with her second child following men on a hazardous campaign, sleeping in the open, hiding in caves, going for days on days without food! The Signora must be out of her mind. Still—she went; with her husband and Paoli and their followers and many of their wives. It was an even harder existence than Saveria, left at home with little Peppino, had painted. But what matter hardships if

they could save their country! As for danger, she never seemed aware of it. They often called her deeds foolhardy. She won the name of amazon among the hardy mountaineers. When they were hiding in the mountain ravines, waiting for the enemy, hearing their shots from afar, hearing them near by as their rifle-balls whistled by them, she would venture forth alone in search of news. What had she to fear? Nothing. She had always trusted in the Madonna. But her husband, the father of her son, where was he! She must know. She found him with a small party that was pressing forward, slowly, carefully, hiding behind trees until they saw a way to dash forward. Once with them, nothing could persuade her to leave. They must take her with them. Insistent, urging, fired with the patriotism of her fathers, she called to them. "Our strength belongs to Corsica. Let us fight—all of us—men, women, children. We have never been slaves of France—we never shall be. Better to die than not to conquer."

One day brought them success; the next failure; and then, faced with overpowering odds, there was nothing left them to do but flee for their lives. Up and up the mountains they climbed until, safe at last in the high fastnesses of Monte Rotondo, surrounded by primeval forests, the little band halted. What could they do now! Another day and they would be without food. It seemed that their last hour had come. Beneath them lay the whole of their island. Their island—now lost to them!

Carlo sank down from discouragement and utter exhaustion. He laid his head in her lap. "We have lost, cara Letizia."

She put her hand caressingly on his head and looked across the valleys that stretched so gratefully beneath them. "We must not lose courage, Carlo. A man is coming among us whom we must rear to save Corsica—destroy the Genoese—conquer the French."

Carlo stirred and looked up into her eyes. He had never seen them so brilliant, so filled with an almost frightening fire. "A man! Who?"

"Our son. I am carrying him now under my heart. Conceived in war, carried through battles, nourished on soldiers' rations—he should come into the world well prepared to defend us. I shall bring him up with this one thought. You shall see."

As if in response to her words, a figure appeared in the range of her vision; a figure in a French uniform waving a white flag—a flag of truce. Her eyes deepened beneath a frown. Her lips muttered contemptuous words. Did they think they would ever surrender!

But Carlo had risen and rushed forward. She could see him going up to the soldier with the white flag. They talked a long time. What could they be saying! Now they were returning—together. The news was overwhelming. Corsica had surrendered. Corsica was now French. But Paoli! He had signed the treaty and then taken refuge on an English ship. What were they to do! Return safely to their homes. Peace had been declared.

She drew herself up proudly. "Peace! It is disgrace. We are no longer a free people."

Carlo vainly attempted to calm her. He actually spoke to the Frenchman as if they were friends. "There is only one thing for us to do, Letizia—return to our house at Corte, gather up little Joseph and Saveria, and make our way to Ajaccio. My uncle Luciano will take us in. He has said that his home was mine—yours."

Return to Ajaccio—her mother—her little step-brother Beppe! That was joy indeed. But—Corsica!

Carlo lifted his shoulders — almost like a Frenchman. She stared at him as though she had never seen him before. "We are helpless, cara mia. We have done our best; and

failed. See what Paoli has done." He lowered his voice so that it reached only her ears. "Realizing our cause was hopeless he has run away, left us with the bag to hold while he feathers his nest in a foreign land. If our leader has acted thus, the least we can do is to accept the inevitable and make the best of it."

She did not answer him for a long time, not until they had struggled down the precipitous slopes of the mountain and reached the road to Corte. Then she touched her husband's arm. Turning toward her, he saw the same blazing fire in her eyes that had startled him a little while before.

"This is not the end. We are going to be avenged—even though our leader has turned traitor and deserted us."

Carlo pressed her hand; tried to draw her to him. She did not respond to his caresses. Her gaze was fixed, determined, exalted. She was no longer the shy girl that he had led away from her home a little more than a year ago. He drew away from her, baffled. What was this strange change that had come over her! Her attitude made her words seem prophetic. Was she, as she had said, carrying a son of battle beneath her heart!

II

Back in Ajaccio; really back in Corsica—for Ajaccio meant Corsica to her. Corte was something foreign, away from the sea, hidden up in those stark mountains, filled with new faces, new customs; but here, down by the blue, blue sea, with familiar scenes everywhere, spots she had grown up in, faces that were a part of her very existence, flowers that she had planted, trees she had seen grow into spreading shade:—ah, this was really home! Returning there was like taking up life anew; beginning again after a long sleep. And yet it was new in many ways. She had gone away a timid girl of fourteen; she came back a wife, an experienced woman of sixteen, a mother. It was no longer necessary to cross the Piazza with downcast eyes, even when the tables of the trattoria were filled with contadini. She could look at them now—rather appraisingly; for had she not fought beside them, taken refuge in mountain recesses with them, urged them on into battle! Still, there were times when her eyes fell before their too admiring glances. In spite of the fact that she was the Signora Buonaparte, the wife of the Conte who had been Paoli's right-hand man, the mother of his son, she was a woman one liked to look at—even more than when she was a young girl on her way to mass. Her eyes were flashing now, her bosom deep, her gestures those of a young matron who was no longer inexperienced; and there was a quiet dignity about her that commanded respect. The rumor soon got afloat that she was a woman who was absorbed in her own interests: her home, her family, her husband, her child.

At first there was a great deal to do. The house of the

Zio Luciano had to be got in order. He welcomed them with open arms and gave them the whole of two floors, reserving only one room for himself. Having become something of an invalid—gout brought on from too keen an appreciation of the wines of his own vineyards, according to Saveria—he had retired from active service in the church. What could be more comfortable than to have his nephew's wife make a home for him! He had never really had one before; at least not one with a family circle. He loved little Joseph. He would love, too—he showed it in the interest he took in the preparations being made—the second child that was expected to arrive at almost any moment. And he promised to teach little Joseph Fesch—whom Letizia had inveigled her mother into letting her have to live with her as she had always thought of him as her own—and help make him into a son of the church, which he had already declared was to be his career.

Saveria, too, was contented with the return to Ajaccio. It was her home; and it was the spot from which that lover with the wanderlust had sailed. Better to be there when he returned. For of course he would return. No Corsican ever left his country forever. And naturally the Signora Letizia could not get along without her, even though they had taken on another woman whom they were paying three francs a month—a stupid, quarrelsome old creature that went by the name of Mammucia Caterina. There were still economies to be made; not so many as at Corte, for now they had the house free of rent. But there was the baby to be thought of; the one already there and the one on the way. And there were the extravagances of the Signor Conte. Any one would have thought he had been born in a garden where riches fell from trees. The way he dressed, his powdered wig, the entertainments for his friends, that deplorable habit of bringing home people to dinner—as if the kitchen was groaning under the weight of maccheroni and sacks of chestnuts and

fiasconi of olive-oil and botte of wine. Santa Pazienza! Perhaps the Madonna Santissima would some day relent and send them gold enough from somewhere—across the blue sea or wherever it came from—not enough to make them vain and boastful, but sufficient for them to know that the kitchen was not empty when Signor Carlo came home with a gay party of friends.

"We have no right to grumble, Saveria. Complaints never bring comforts."

"Then what does bring them, Signora? I'd like to know."

"Hard work, economy, saving every soldo."

"Sant' Antonio! Is there a woman in the world that makes more economies than you! You will not eat enough yourself for fear the Signor Conte might not have every morsel he desires."

"Silenzio! He is the master of the house. My master. Yours. It is his right to have the best."

Saveria's silence did not come spontaneously; it arrived through ominous mutterings. If this was the way women slaved for men she thanked the Holy Virgin from the bottom of her heart—she would even put flowers at her feet the very next day to show her gratefulness—that she had sent that Corsican of hers sailing away across the blue sea. If he hadn't gone—there was no telling—she might have been working and slaving and wearing herself out as the Signora was doing.

"You would have done it willingly, Saveria. If you love a man nothing is too much."

"It is a sin to love a man too much. The arciprete himself told me so."

"Love him too much! I couldn't. Isn't he the handsomest man in the world, the bravest, the kindest! And does he not love me? There is nothing I would not do for him."

"Even to bearing him a child each year!"

"What is more beautiful than that!" The flashing look was in the dark brown eyes. "I pray every day that the Madonna will give me a child every year. I want the house filled with them. It is the greatest happiness that a woman can have."

"Then you had better come to early mass with me this morning, Signora. It is Assunzione. From your appearance, I should say the Madonna is near to granting you your second child."

There was already much scurrying about the house. The Zio Luciano had donned his purple vestments and gone to the Duomo. Carlo had also left early. On such a holiday he would be sure to find many friends at the trattoria, friends from the mountains, from neighboring villages, perhaps even from Corte. The August festa was one that no one could afford to miss. Garlands of sweet-scented leaves, flowers, pine boughs, were hanging before the houses; in some places quite across the street. Before the Duomo were rows and rows of candles that would be lighted when night came on. Beppe Fesch was arrayed in his Sunday velvet breeches and waiting impatiently at the door to walk bravely beside his adored big sister. Baby Peppino was left in the care of Mammucia Caterina, who was cursing the fate that kept her from going to mass on such an occasion. At last they were all ready.

Within the gloom of the Duomo, kneeling, her head bowed, Letizia realized that Saveria had guessed right. The Madonna seemed actually impatient to grant her prayer. But surely she would wait until the mass was finished! Her hand grasped Saveria's and clung to it. No—she could not wait. She must go home at once. Panoria Permon, back from France, hurried to her side as she left the church. What was the matter! Was she ill! She managed to smile over her answer: "Only my son of battle." She hurried on

toward home. And so determined was the Madonna to answer her prayer that she did not have time to reach her room. The second son came into the world in the salone that was all prepared with flowers in honor of the festa.

When Carlo was found in the Piazza and rushed back to the house, Saveria held out toward him a bundle of swaddling-clothes. "The second sacred bambino—born with a thumb in his mouth."

Carlo took the bundle and looked down at the baby that was now screaming with unwonted vigor. He had thought Joseph's cries were loud enough. They were nothing by comparison with this.

"I'm glad he has such a big head," said the proud father. "It's almost as big as his voice."

"What is to be the name of this one, Signor Conte?"

He glanced at his wife; carried the baby to her; knelt beside the couch and kissed her hands.

"Cara mia, we have already agreed; have we not? The second son of my family has always born the name of Napolione. It is a good name. It means lion of the desert."

Letizia gathered the bundle into her arms and pressed the screaming baby to her breast. She smiled; and then she nodded. "Lion of the desert. It will suit him." Her eyes grew reflective, dreamy; she seemed to be looking far off into an unknown land. "Conceived in moments of alarm. Carried through battles. Nourished on soldiers' rations." At the sound of her voice, the screams of the baby diminished, died away. She looked at him. Saveria swore that it was exactly the expression the statue of the Madonna had worn that morning. "My little Nabulio," she murmured softly.

"Do you want many children, Carlo?"

"I want as many as you will give me, Letizia. I want our race to increase and multiply."

" 'Tis well. My mother has always told me that children were a woman's tokens of honor. We shall have many—if my prayers are answered."

There was such a thing as answering prayers too rapidly, Saveria thought. One baby a year gave one no rest at all. Hardly had one come into the world before another was on the way. The way things were going the house would soon be too small for them. But what could you expect when the Signora, not satisfied with the custom of the paese of making gifts of candles to be placed at the shrine of the Madonna and giving bread to the poor, this at the birth of each child, had gone to the extent of making a vow that all daughters born to her should be named for the Mother of all the Angels! Already there were Giuseppe, Nabulionello, Luciano, Maria Anna, and Luigi. And only the Madonna knew how many more might be on the way. It was all very well to call them tokens of honor, but where was the money coming from to feed them! And the Signor Conte with his extravagant tastes increasing; his fine clothes; his constant travels to foreign lands! The last banquet he had given had cost a year's income. Listening at closed doors, Saveria had found this out. She had heard him even suggest to the Signora that she sell her vineyard of La Sposata—her wedding dowry—which she so dearly loved. That would tide them over a bad time. But the Signora had not consented to the sale—grazie a Dio! Sometimes she could show herself not all clay in the master's hands.

"Now that we are French, Letizia, we must live differently. We must impress these new officials."

Her eyes clouded. Years under foreign rule had not dimmed her pride of race.

"You know yourself that our cause failed." Carlo's shoulders lifted lightly. "As long as we had a national party there

was no one more faithful than I. But—that is ended. It is our duty to be French patriots now and cry long live the King." He took her hands in his and leaned toward her persuasively. "We are not acting differently from others. Think of your mother's husbands—your father Ramolino and her second husband Fesch. Both served under the Genoese to their profit, in spite of the fact that some said their actions were against Corsica. It is always that way with men who are ambitious. They must take advantage of their opportunities. So must we. Here I am with a lawyer's training, speaking French. I must let these officials know I can be useful to them. I must make them realize I can be as good a French patriot as I was Corsican. It goes against the grain. I love Corsica as you do, but"—again his hands went out with that gesture he had already acquired from the French—"what can I do! We must think of our family, our sons, our daughter. The King's commissioner will arrive this week—Comte de Marbœuf. He is to be the governor of the island. We must make him our friend. I count on you, cara mia, to help me."

When he talked in this strain to her he seemed to grow remote, more like a stranger than her husband, the father of her children. His words bewildered, offended her. Somehow, she could not crush the feeling deep within her that he was leading her far from the paths trodden by the heroes of her family. Her father putting his own interests above those of his country! Paoli a traitor! Surely Carlo could not know what he was saying. Those French were twisting him about their fingers. Yet, a week later, when he told her the Governor had arrived, that he had called on him and found him a most elegant old gentleman, that an invitation had been extended for her to call at the Citadel, she found her excuses futile.

"I do not speak French. He does not speak Italian."

"You can make yourself understood in French. No Frenchman is slow to understand when a beautiful woman speaks to him."

"I have nothing to wear."

"There is time to make a new dress. A boat was in last week with bales of rich brocades from Firenze."

Her lips tightened. "We cannot afford rich brocades. We need all we have for food—for the children."

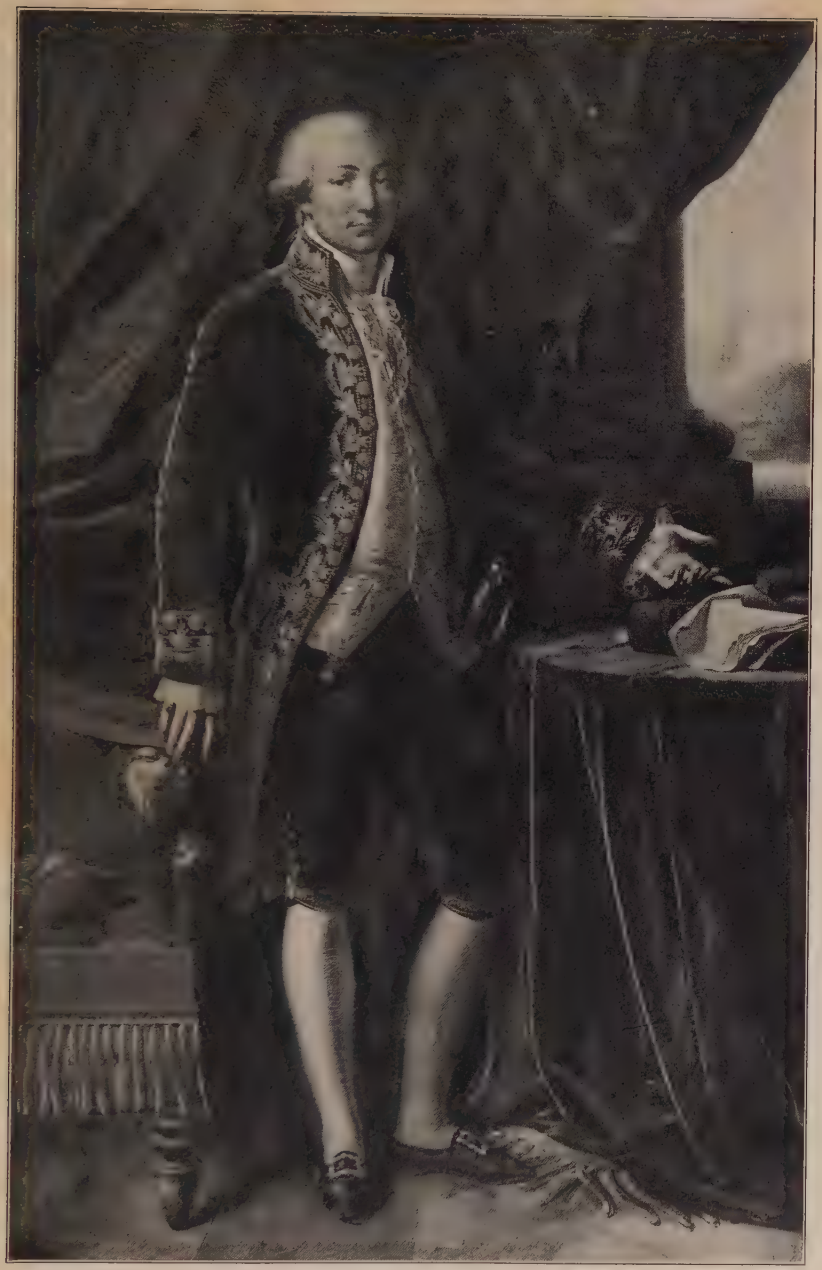
Impatience shot across Carlo's handsome countenance. "Leave that to me. I'll buy the brocade myself."

She hesitated a moment. "No. I'll see what can be done. There should be something left in the chest we brought from Corte—my wedding-chest. Saveria and I can manage something."

And they did; though it was far from being as resplendent as what other matrons were wearing when they made their first bows to the Governor General. Saveria found it a rather lugubrious costume and at the last moment produced the fringed shawl which had been stored away for so many years. It proved as becoming as it had to the girl of fourteen—in spite of its almost overpowering scent of camphor.

On the way to the Citadel, Carlo was full of suggestions. In speaking of the children—and he was sure she would—he thought it diplomatic to call them by their French names. Not Giuseppe, Nabulio, Luciano; but Joseph, Napoléon, Lucien. This would be a compliment to the Governor. She accepted the suggestion without comment, though it seemed to her a relinquishment of all traditions—that her children should change their names to please the conquerors of their own land. However, she murmured the French equivalents to herself—to be sure she would get them right and please Carlo.

Once in the presence of the gracious old gentleman who came forward to greet her, she found herself meeting him with little if any resentment. He was different from any



Carlo Maria Buonaparte.

From the painting by Girodet-Trioson.

man she had ever known; and he treated her as she had never been treated—not even by Paoli. Indeed, he made Paoli appear a mountain bandit. His sumptuous suit of dark-blue velvet embroidered with silver galloon, the exquisite Valenciennes lace at his neck and wrists, the flowered brocade of his waistcoat, the sparkling buckles on his shoes, made resentment flash through her. He was dressed as she would so like to see Carlo dressed. But the resentment was only momentary. He was bowing over her hand, kissing it, and leading her toward a chair with a courtliness that was irresistible. And his pleasant old eyes—dark, alert, admiring—somehow warmed her and made her feel at ease. She felt they were going to be friends; and the realization brought intense relief. She had doubted Carlo's wisdom in insisting that she make this call. Now she saw that he was right. And, most encouraging of all, the old gentleman, after he had gossiped easily of the gaieties of Paris and the gorgeous balls in his handsome hôtel in the Faubourg Saint Honoré —subjects he had found most interested the ladies who had already called—was quick to see they meant nothing to this last caller and soon shifted the conversation to domestic subjects. Had Madame de Buonaparte children? How many? Only five! He was under the impression all Corsicans had large families. Even in France they had five children, sometimes six—but not very often.

"I shall have more," she stated with assurance.

Indeed! And what was she going to do with them? Were they to be sent to school? Was she going to make good Frenchmen of them?

"I am teaching them myself—the little I know. Their uncle, a monsignore, helps me. But that is not enough. I want them to have every advantage that I lacked."

Carlo was watching anxiously to see what impression she made. He was satisfied. It had always been the same with her; with the people of Corte, with Paoli, with every one

who met her, most of all with himself that first time his uncle had taken him to her home. Her quiet charm, her sincerity, her simplicity, the warming glow in her eyes when she was interested, her slow smile that had so much real dignity and calm sweetness in it! He listened contentedly to the sound of her low voice, flowing now in spite of halting French, as she had been led to the subject nearest her heart—her children. He could not help smiling over her efforts to speak of them with French names. Giuseppe—no, Joseph. Nabulio—Napoléon. And the suave old Frenchman was listening, too, with an intensity that would have made any one believe he was deeply interested.

"Then, already, Madame, you find they are showing their inclinations! That is well. It will be easier to direct them."

"I am sure Giuseppe—Joseph—will enter the church as my stepbrother is doing. The men of our family have always been either of the church or the army."

"Fighters, I see—for the soul and the body."

She let this pass unnoticed. "He is a serious child—a hard student."

"And the second son—what is his name?"

"Napoléon." She managed the French this time without stumbling. "No—he is not for the church. He was conceived when we were fighting. I carried him through battles."

The Governor smiled whimsically. "Against the French?"

She flushed and nodded, with a glance toward Carlo. "When I asked him what he wanted his last birthday he said a drum and a gun."

Again the Governor smiled. "Which you refused him."

Her eyes flashed. "Which I gave him."

The Governor nodded. "Ah! Then we must make him a soldier of France!"

The significant suggestion was not noticed. She now had a listener who was interested. The subject never failed to

make her eloquent. "To be a soldier is his only thought. Only last week I found him standing out in the rain in the garden during a storm. There was thunder and lightning. I called to him to come in. He usually obeys me. This time he did not. So—I let him stay there and get wet. I thought it would be a good lesson for him. But what do you think he said, Your Excellency, when he finally came in! He said I had told him of the time when his father and I had been exposed to all sorts of weather when we were fighting with Paoli and that he wanted to get used to it so that when he became a soldier he would not be afraid of storms. What do you think of that?"

The old gentleman's eyes twinkled. "I am more interested to know what reply you made."

Her face became grave with dignity. "I told him that if he wanted to be a good soldier the first thing he had to learn was to obey his superior officer."

Carlo thought a sufficient impression had been made. Whether the Governor's interest was assumed or not, it seemed high time to change the subject. "He is a mere scrap of a boy, Your Excellency; not yet ten. There is still time to make him into a good soldier. Letizia must first get him strong and robust. As for his being a soldier of France—he will follow his father's lead."

But the old gentleman was not yet ready to shift his attention to the husband. His appraising, admiring, glance was still upon the wife. He seemed to be weighing in his mind some important question. When he broke the short silence he still addressed the wife. "Madame, you know, I'm sure, the gravity of the situation here. I have come as Governor-General to a people who refuted our control. That is all over now. We have both signed an amnesty. You have agreed to become French. But—I am told that most Corsicans still hate us. If it is so, I am going to ask you to help me overcome this feeling."

The request bewildered her. What could she do to help a representative of the great Louis Quinze, she, only the wife of Carlo Buonaparte, the mother of his children!

"A great deal, Madame. Perhaps more than any other lady on the island. I know the position you and your husband hold here. They tell me there is no one more respected, more highly thought of." The Governor took out his snuff-box, spilled a little on his handsome brocaded waistcoat, brushed it aside lightly. "I am going to give a great ball as soon as I can make this fortress presentable. I want all of the representative families of Corsica to be present. I am told that many have retired to their country estates and will have nothing to do with us French. Madame, will you help me bring them back?"

Her glance wavered to Carlo. His smile, bright with pleasure, reassured her. "But what, Your Excellency, can I do? I go nowhere. I have no time. My children——"

The Frenchman held up protesting hands. "Just for that reason your presence at my ball will be more significant. If it is known that Madame de Buonaparte is coming, it will do more for me than anything else. It will mean that real Corsican patriots have forgotten their enmity—that they have accepted the friendship of France—that——"

Her head lifted. "But not that they have forgotten they are Corsicans."

The old gentleman sighed and looked out of the window. "I suppose that is asking too much." His eyes shifted back to the woman before him. Mon Dieu, she was handsome!—with her proud eyes, her noble brow, her deep bosom, her exquisite hands so simply, so firmly folded in her lap. "At any rate it shall be my mission while here to attempt the impossible. I suppose," his glance of frank admiration softened into a smile, "I shall have to begin with your children."

She did not meet his smile. "They will always be what I am."

The Governor rose and, bowing low, lifted her hand to his lips. "Then, Madame, you will have every reason to be proud of them."

He was now ready to give his attention to the waiting husband. The talk shifted to the political situation. A deputation was soon to be sent from Corsica to Paris. The members would be selected by the Governor. He would be much honored if Comte de Buonaparte would be one of the commission.

"I owe it all to you, cara mia," Carlo said that night as he paused on the steps while Letizia snuffed the candles. "I have owed everything to you from the very first. You have brought me happiness. Now you are bringing me success. It is only for us to decide what we want. The Governor will give it to us—if you ask him."

He gazed at her as she stood holding a candle in her hand, its light glowing only on her face. Years ago he had told her what her name represented—the ancient goddess of the Romans, the allegorical Letizia, the one represented with an anchor in her hand, a crown on her head, a smile on her lips. Now, in the full flower of her beauty, imposing, mistress of herself, resourceful, full of power, she seemed the reincarnation of the antique statue.

She mounted the steps, leaving a trailing shadow behind her. "I wonder what he meant when he said he must begin with the children," she murmured to herself.

Saveria had come to the end of her Santa Pazienza. The children—well, they were showing themselves to be little beasts, nothing else. All that bathing the Signora insisted upon must be affecting their nerves. What was the use of a bath every day when they would be dirtier than ever the next day! The little ones, Maria Anna and Luciano and Luigi, she could manage pretty well; but Giuseppe and that

Nabulio with the head much too big for his puny body were driving her straight to the diavolo. "Senta, Signora, what did I catch him doing to-day! Singing in the middle of the Piazza; not singing to himself, mind you, but at the good sisters on their way to mass. Poor Suor'Orso—you know, Signora, the one with the body like a fiascone and legs like olive twigs"—here Saveria interrupted herself to indulge in a hearty outburst of merriment—"she got the brunt of it. He made fun of her before the whole trattoria. If she had only returned his song in kind, it might have taught him a lesson. Such a sight as he was! His stockings all hanging down over his boots. I can do nothing with him. And more than that, he has been stealing figs from the Zio Luciano's favorite tree."

Letizia's brows drew together ominously. "You saw him stealing them?"

"No, Signora—but they are gone; and the Zio Luciano is furious."

"Send Nabulio to me."

"But there is something else to tell you, Signora—about the Zio Luciano. When I was making his bed this morning, I felt something heavy in the mattress. Naturally I looked to see what it was. What do you think I found there?" Saveria's eyes began to sparkle. "A bag of gold. I held it up. It rattled beautifully." The glitter concentrated into an intense flame. "He is rich, Signora. There is no reason for us to be poor. Why do you not go to him and tell him he must give you money! Now that the Signor Conte has gone off to Paris and left us with nothing, it is only right that the Zio should help you. You have not eaten enough this past month —and another baby on the way. It is not right that you should suffer."

"If we suffer, Saveria, we do so because the good God knows it is for our benefit. Send me Nabulio."

She waited in the kitchen, where Saveria had found her, until the little boy was dragged toward her, his face drawn into an ugly scowl. She took him firmly by the hands. Waiting for his eyes to meet hers, she sighed deeply. Her voice, when she began speaking to him, had all the sad tenderness depicted in that statue in the Duomo of the Mater Dolorosa. The scowl deepened on his face; then suddenly disappeared in a tempest of tears. But he would not admit he was sorry; he would not promise to ask the Zio's pardon; he would not speak at all. Failing any response, she finally took him by the hand and led him up-stairs to the storeroom. There she locked him up until he was ready to confess and admit that he was sorry. Returning to the kitchen she was met with the curious eyes of little Maria Anna and the still smaller Luciano.

"I have locked Nabulio in the dispensa. He has stolen figs from the Zio's tree. If you do the same you will suffer a like punishment. My children shall neither lie nor steal. Mark my words well."

That evening she went quietly up to the locked door and called softly. No answer came. "Nabulio." A muttered response reached her. "Are you ready to confess?" No reply. "I am waiting, Nabulio." Still no answer. She turned away reluctantly and went down-stairs. The next morning she was at the door again, this time with a crust of bread and a cup of water. She opened the door and found the deep gray eyes of the child staring reproachfully at her. They were almost accusing—as if she were the culprit.

"Have you repented, Nabulio?"

The gray eyes grew black; the dirty little fists clinched; the big head jerked up defiantly. "There is nothing to repent of."

Again she locked the door and went down-stairs, this time more silent than before, more troubled. That a child of

hers should defy her was incredible. Her determination increased. This was going to be a test of will—his and hers. Though it made him suffer—her too—she would yet conquer.

That evening her courage began to wane. He had been locked up now for twenty-four hours, with only bread and water. Standing over the oven she was wondering how much longer he could hold out—how much longer she could —when Saveria rushed into the kitchen dragging Maria Anna behind her.

"Signora—she did it! Signora di Borgo saw her from the top floor. Nabulio saw her too; but he would not tell on her."

Maria Anna burst into tears. "Please Mammina—I——"

The mother's eyes darkened. "You let him take the blame!"

"I begged him not to tell on me. He promised not to. I——"

She brushed the confessing child aside and rushed up the steps. A few moments later she had the little boy crushed to her breast. "My little Nabulio—my treasure—cocco mio! I am proud of you. I shall always be proud of you. Guard your promises that way and you will be a great man. Tomorrow I shall arrange the little room on the terrace for you. It will be yours to study in. Oh, I know—they call you the little mathematician at school. Some day they will call you the great mathematician. Only wait. But—you must be starving. Dry bread and water for a whole day and night."

"I didn't mind, Mammina. You said you and the soldiers lived on it when you were fighting with General Paoli. I can live on it too."

"Yes, yes, later, Nabulio. Not yet. Come down-stairs. I will make you a big platter of pasta myself—all covered with salsa di pomodoro. You must eat and become strong."

"You love him most of all, Signora," Saveria scoffed as

the little boy retreated to the corner of the kitchen with his bowl of steaming maccheroni. "You will ruin him with your love."

"I love them all alike. If I seem to love one more it is because at that time he needs me most."

"But you know little Giuseppe is better. I call him a comfort to any mother's heart."

"Yes—Giuseppe is fitted for the church. You will confess to him yet, Saveria."

Saveria received this with a burst of derisive laughter. Confess to a child! "You seem to think you know what they are all going to be when they become men. I'd like to know what you've planned for the piccolo Luciano. If you could have seen him this morning, standing before a mirror and repeating a poem the Zio had taught him. What does that signify?"

The mother's eyes softened. "Little Luciano. Who can tell!" She smiled reflectively. "Perhaps that means he will be a great orator."

"And the Signorina Maria Anna?" Saveria was determined to have the careers of each one arranged at once.

"She will be what all women should be—a good wife and a mother."

The first letter from Carlo, coming all the way from Paris, brought cheerful tidings. He, as a member of the Corsican deputation, had been received by the King. The reception in Paris had been all that could be desired. "I am the only one of the committee who speaks French. They all rely on me. I am making a great many useful friends. I have told them what must be done for Corsica. They have listened to me and I feel sure they will soon give orders to the Governor-General to have the mulberry gardens laid out and also begin work on utilizing the salt marshes, which you

know has so long been my dream. Of course I am going to see to it that I am made director of both undertakings. Our troubles are over, cara Letizia. We shall soon be rich."

The Governor listened with interest to the reading of this letter. He was a constant visitor to the house now. He spent whole evenings there playing reversi with Letizia; and she beat him as she had Paoli at Corte. They talked of many things, especially politics—at least the Governor talked of them and Letizia listened; yet before the evenings were ended she invariably found time to recount to him anecdotes of the children.

"It will soon be time to think of sending them to France, Madame Letizia," the old gentleman had often suggested; each time to be met with a silent shake of the head. "You do not think so favorably of that as when I first came? Is it that knowing me so well you do not wish your sons to be brought up as Frenchmen?"

"It is quite otherwise, Your Excellency," she murmured, trying to hide the shadows in her eyes. "Sometimes I think that you have been an evil influence—in making me admire France too much. Before you came I was inclined to think of it as a country in which people lived only for pleasure. Now—I see that it is necessary that my children be educated there."

"Then why did you shake your head? Have you not confidence enough in me to tell me?"

She still hesitated. Pride kept her a long time silent. " 'Tis that we see no hope of ever bearing such an expense."

"But such good patriots as you—I am speaking now of French patriots," the old man added with his mischievous smile—"should be rewarded by the Government. I have been giving the matter much thought. I have already written to France. I have many friends there. I have written to the Archbishop of Autun and asked if it were not possible to

arrange for Joseph to be admitted to the school there as a free scholar. For that violent little soldier—he must go to the military academy at Brienne. That, I am sure, can be arranged. As for your half-brother, how would he like to go to the seminary at Aix?"

She listened, star-eyed, flushed, incredulous. Could it be possible that her dreams were coming true! In a moment of spontaneous joy she grasped the Governor's withered old hand and pressed her lips to it.

"If such things were only possible! But I am not worthy of such blessings. I have done nothing to deserve them."

The old gentleman patted her hand. "You have done everything that is good in this world. I have known many women in my gay old life—great ladies of Paris and Vienna and Rome—none of whom were half so charming and beautiful and good as you, Madame Letizia. What is in my power to give you is yours—if you will but accept it."

When Carlo returned from the long voyage to France, she had to listen for days and days to a recountal of the wonders he had seen: the court at Versailles and a garden fête at which the fountains were illuminated with colored fires; the beauty of the Austrian Queen; the graciousness of the fat King; the endless corridors of the Tuileries; the treasures of the Louvre. "You must go with me one of these days, Letizia."

She shook her head. "All that is not for me, Carlo. I should not know what to do with myself there. Corsica is enough for me. I am happy here. My place is in the home—with the children."

He was not yet ready to talk of the children. He had seen too much; he had accomplished great things. He had returned with orders to redeem the salt marshes and lay out the nursery gardens. This was going to mean riches for his

countrymen—and for himself. "And I have had time to study the branches of my family. There are institutions in France that assist members of impoverished aristocratic families. All that is necessary is to prove one's status. I did that. They have accepted us as a noble family. I was also given a chance to tell them in Paris how much we like the Governor. He has enemies—like all of us. I scouted all the scandal that had been reported of him. He is to remain here. We must hang his picture in the salone. That will please him."

She loathed these opportunist sentiments that Carlo was growing more and more inclined to express. They offended her ideals. Deeply rooted in her was the feeling, the belief, that one got on in the world only by one's own efforts; that assistance from others came only when one had proved oneself worthy of trust, shown oneself efficient. Rising through flattering others seemed to her the depths of degradation. Still, she kept silent. She was inexperienced. Carlo knew the world. But she could express her confidence in the Governor. "No flattery is necessary with him, Carlo. He loves us like a father. He has come to the house often during your absence. If you will listen to me, I will tell you what he has planned for the children."

Carlo finally listened. The news seemed almost too good to be true. When would they know if the plans would go through! Autun for Joseph; Brienne for Napoléon! They must be got ready for the voyage. He would accompany them himself. They were too young to go alone. He would mention the matter at once to the Governor.

And so Letizia found herself sitting up through the nights, sewing and piecing and knitting for her two sons and her half-brother—her son too. Only nine and ten years old. Of course it was for their good to go. She wanted them to go. But the deadening pain in her heart was hard to bear.

Would she ever see them again! Would they ever come back to her! Friends and relatives came in to help. Zia Geltrude knitted stockings; Zia Touta helped with shirts; Zio Nicolino contributed a roll of brown cloth for suits; even Zio Luciano produced two gleaming louis—from his mattress, Saveria asserted—to buy some fine linen for kerchiefs. The house was buzzing all day long and late into the night. Little by little the time crept nearer. At last only two days were left before the boat was to sail. What would they like best to do the last day? A cry went up from both boys. "Milelli! Milelli!" Very well, they would go; just she and them and Beppe Fesch—for he was leaving on the same boat to go to the seminary at Aix. They would not even allow Saveria to go with them. They would take lunch along and she would cook the maccheroni herself. Of course they could help her if they wanted to. Peppino could grate the cheese; Nabulio could build the fire—a real camp-fire. They would be just like soldiers in the woods. Afterward she would tell them stories of how she and their father had spent days and nights—dark, windy, rainy nights—out in the forests expecting at any time to take prisoners or be taken prisoners themselves.

"But you would never have let them take you a prisoner, Mammina!" Nabulio's eyes were full of scowling reproach.

"Not if I could help it."

"I mean you'd rather have died—killed yourself!"

"I couldn't have done that because—because it would have been killing you too. Besides—only cowards kill themselves."

Packed in the cart, with Beppe Fesch driving, they started off early in the morning and followed the coast. The Isole Sanguiniere, across a perfectly still emerald sea, seemed within touching distance. Before the heat of the day had come they stopped before two stone pillars which had once

formed the imposing entrance to the Giardino dei Milelli—the country estate of the Buonaparte family. The boys tumbled from the cart and ran ahead. Letizia and Beppe unhooked the old cream-colored mare and turned her out to graze. Hand in hand, they walked along an avenue of cactus toward the crumbling villa.

"What good times we've had here, Beppe. Will they ever come back to us again?"

He pressed her hand between his own. "Sorella mia—do not be sad. We shall all come back to live with you. I—first of all. As soon as I have taken my orders, I am going to ask to be returned to Ajaccio to be a prete here—and live beside you always. I have no other desire in life."

She looked at him with wistful eyes. More really son than brother; and yet only six years younger; an intimate part of her life—even before Carlo and her children had come into it! Parting with him was like parting with her own. She put out her hand and touched his arm, clung to it. His sturdiness was comforting.

The boys had already found their way to the kitchen and were building a fire. Their efforts proved more troublesome than helpful. She sent them away while she prepared the maccheroni herself. Then, having eaten until she was sure their little stomachs would burst, she made them sit beside her beneath the ancient oak where she had taught them their first lessons. All thoughts of siesta were scouted. This last day must not be wasted with closed eyes—even for a tiny mezz'ora. Nabulio insisted they must hear one more story of those thrilling days with Paoli. "You have heard them again and again. You must know them by heart." They did; but they would like to hear them again—especially that one about the mule on which she was riding and which got frightened when she was fording a swollen mountain torrent. "You must have been horribly frightened, Mam-

mina!" Giuseppe shuddered. "You must have loved it!" cried Nabulio with sparkling eyes. "It was neither. I knew I was in danger and there was no chance of the others helping me. Your father and all the men were on the shore. They did not have time to reach me. What had to be done must be done by me alone. I had to save myself. The mule was much more frightened than I was. He had lost his footing in the current." "What did you do, Mammina?" both voices demanded as if they did not already know the answer. "I talked to the mule very quietly. I patted him on the neck. I told him there was nothing to be frightened of; that all he had to do was to swim straight toward the shore; that I would guide him." "And he did it!" She nodded slowly. "He realized that I was not frightened. That gave him confidence. He saved himself and me. It is a good thing to remember, my sons. When you are in danger don't become alarmed. Try to be very quiet. That will save you every time."

When she had finished, Nabulio stretched himself out on the grass, propped his chin in his hands, and gazed a long time silently before him. Her stories always made him thoughtful. It seemed as if he were trying to impress them on his mind, remember details, hold on to them for future use.

Finally she rose and clasping one little hand in each of hers wandered with them down under the silver-green olive-groves to the sapphire sea. Along the way she talked to them more seriously; about themselves and the adventures that awaited them in a strange land. Their eager faces hurt her. It was so obvious that they were looking only forward. She, looking back, would be the one to feel the separation.

"Giuseppe—you are my first-born. They say a mother loves her first-born best. That is true; she does—until her second child comes. In the end you all become equal." She

looked down into the gentle eyes upturned to her. "You are stronger than Nabulio. You have been like a little father to him. You must continue to be that, always. You will be nearer him than I. You must look after him. He worships you. As for yourself—you have chosen the church. You can have no better counsel. Listen to what the good fathers teach you and live by their precepts. And you, Nabulio"—she stopped and a sigh escaped her—"you must try to grow strong and robust. There are so many things I would tell you. First—try to be more respectful to your elders. Try to be more gentle, more gracious. Every one is ready to be your friend if you will only meet them half-way. We need friends—all of us. We can't get along without them. Now that you are going to be away from me there will be no one to make you go to mass. You must do that of your own accord because—because I ask you. And say your prayers regularly—as Peppino does. As for study, do that faithfully; more and more all the time. Do not neglect it for mere reading. And most of all"—she pressed his hand tightly in hers—"whatever you do, do not forget that you are Corsican. This is your home. These are your people."

She felt his hand clinching in hers. "I'm going to do all the harm I can to those Frenchmen."

She laughed softly, in spite of herself. "No—do them no harm. Do no one harm. But remain loyal to your country. And write me every month. Tell me everything. Tell me always what is nearest your heart."

She released their hands and sent them down to the beach to swim under the watchful eyes of Beppe Fesch. She sat alone and watched them from the height. It seemed such a little while gone that she had sat there as a girl and dreamed of what was going to become of her. Now she was dreaming of what was to become of her sons—those little splashing mites down there in the sea, parts of her body, frag-

ments of her soul. She clasped her hands and bowed her head. Might the Madonna watch over them always; make them fine, noble men; send them happiness; grant them even more joy than had been vouchsafed her.

The next day she went down to the quay to see them off. She wanted to be sure they were safely stored away in the hold of the ship. With boys, you could never tell. She made Carlo promise not to let them get out of his sight; she even made the captain promise to keep an eye on them. After the sails had been hoisted and the prow of the boat shoved out toward the open sea, she stood there silent and thoughtful. Saveria insisted that they should be returning to the house. She did not answer. Her glance was fastened on that disappearing sail. A part of her was gone—far across the seas. The first break in life had come. At last she turned away—one word only on her lips.

"Coraggio!"

A new, absorbing interest had come into the drudgery of daily work; that constant waiting for a sail on the horizon that would bring letters from the boys—Giuseppe's written regularly in a script that was already scholarly. He was happy and contented and making great progress. Nabulio's less regularly; and almost impossible to read, such was his unformed scrawl. He, alas, was far from happy. To be so far away from the home of his birth—from the vineyards of La Sposata—from the warm winds of Corsica—from his Mammina Letizia! It was unbearable. He could not believe that he must remain away six years. And those French boys—how he hated them! Prigs—with many francs to spend and fine clothes to wear. They never let him forget he was a foreigner. There was only one he liked, a boy named Bourienne. But he was studying hard.

"You are having your first battle, my son—with life,"

Letizia wrote him. "We all have to suffer. Pay no attention to the taunts of those about you. Remember you are Corsican and that, though poor, you are of noble birth—as noble as any there—and that you are able to surpass them all."

Letters from Beppe Fesch helped assuage the pain of Nabulio's sufferings. He wrote of the great joy before him of soon entering the church. How wonderful to return to Ajaccio in vestments!

She needed cheering news at this time. Another child had been sent away, Maria Anna, to the famous institution founded by Madame de Maintenon at St. Cyr—this, as always, at the instance of the fairy godfather, the Comte de Marbœuf. He never failed her. And another daughter had arrived to take the place of the one sent away, little Maria Paoletta. The prettiest of them all, according to Saveria; and again named for the Madonna who had never yet failed to answer a prayer—at least prayers for children. Prayers for riches were never answered. Saveria often wondered if the Signora really prayed sincerely for riches. There was a saying that when one did not pray with one's whole heart the prayer was not answered. Only what one desired desperately really came. What if the Signora did not mind work and making all those tiresome economies that increased each day! What if she were just naturally stingy! Sometimes women got that way—just from habit.

"We cannot afford it," she would say, almost sternly, when Saveria suggested that a monte biancho be made of chestnuts. "When the Signor Conte returns—perhaps. But not for us alone. We can get along on maccheroni; and without so much cheese. We must make that kilo last another week."

When the Signor Conte returned! Saveria shook her head. He was always wandering about the world, talking

beautifully of this, that, and the other plan that was going to bring them everything their hearts might desire. But he always came back with his mouth full of beautiful words and his pockets empty. Blessings on the Holy Mother who had saved her from this slavery of Corsican wives!

Then, even more depressing than dire poverty, Carlo's dreams began to dwindle; his words became less beautiful; even his travels were less frequent. Finally he made a last voyage, this time in search of health. He actually did not want to go. His energy was all gone. He said he wanted to stay with Letizia now, especially as there was soon to be another baby. "I have already left you too much, cara mia. Let me make up for lost time now." But the doctors insisted that there were waters in France that would cure him of that incessant, gnawing pain in his stomach. At last he was persuaded to go; though in order to make the voyage money had to be borrowed. The Governor advanced it willingly and was deeply hurt when Letizia besought him to accept the family plate as security.

Months passed with only short letters which told little of himself and his condition. His thoughts now seemed to centre only on those left behind. Discouragement appeared ominously between the lines. Could he be very ill and would not admit it! At last a letter came from Montpellier, but not from him, from Panoria Permon, who was living there, had met him and taken him into her home. She wrote that he was far from well. Could not some member of the family be sent to him! She feared the worst.

"Beppe Fesch must go," Letizia cried in her agony. "He is now an abbé at Aix. He must take Peppino with him. Carlo must not be left there without some of us. Alas—that I cannot go myself!"

From these two she soon received letters. The end had come. Giuseppe had held his father's hand at the last mo-

ment. He had been intrusted with the fortunes of the family. "He told me, Mammina, that I must now take his place; that though I was only sixteen, I must consider myself a man, a father, the head of the family. I am returning at once to carry out his wishes. He often asked why Napolione was not with me. He said he could see him very clearly with his drum and sword. He asked why he did not come and help him battle against the enemy that was lurking in the shadows about his bed."

Alone, wishing to escape the sympathy of those about her, Letizia took the letter and wandered far out of the town. Spring was in the air. It was February, with its promise of fields of narcissus. Almond blossoms, too. How long ago it seemed—that morning she had run away from the house to meet Carlo! Her faltering steps ceased. She was once more before the shrine where she had waited for him. How long ago! A lifetime. She was then a girl. Now she was an old woman—thirty long, struggling, happy years. Yes—she knew now how happy they had been. What more could be left for her to do! Alone! The word caught her in the midst of choking sobs. It was an ugly word. It had no place in her life. She lifted her head. She tried to smile. The word that was so constantly on her lips returned. "Coraggio. Coraggio." The Madonna had answered her prayers. She could never be alone. There were her eight children.

She returned to the town with firm steps. The past was finished. It must remain forever behind her. But—the future! Yes—she could meet it bravely. She would. Nothing should ever daunt her.

She entered the house and called to Saveria.

"Where is little Girolomo? And Maria Paoletta? Bring them to me. And Luigi and Maria Annunziata. Tell them it is time for supper. Where is Luciano? Ah—I see him! Still

learning that poem to recite to his uncle. Figlio mio—leave the book a while. Come here and say the words to me. I shall listen much better than your uncle because—because I love the sound of your voice. It is like music to me." She held out her arms to them, gathering them to her much as a hen does her brood. And when they were all there, her eyes glowed deeply—with that brilliance that is only seen in mothers' eyes.

Her tokens of honor!

III

GIUSEPPE was back with her now; no longer little, a tall fellow of sixteen, grave and quiet, as gentle as ever and trying to be the dignified head of the family that his father had told him he must be; and Beppe Fesch, fresh from the seminary at Aix, a full-fledged abbé—Monsieur l'Abbé, if you please, with hopes of soon being the Grand Vicar of Ajaccio. These two and Letizia made up the family council, though Zio Luciano, almost always in bed with crippling gout, was still what Saveria called the treasurer of the family. It was he who received the income from the vineyard of La Sposata, haggled with the peasants from Milelli, and more important still had complete charge of the finances. "If he would only dole out a little of the gold he keeps hidden in his mattress," Saveria wailed, "we might have more to eat!" Paoletta, Maria Annunziata, and the baby Girolomo were growing like weeds and must have nourishing food. What was a widow's pension from the Government when one had to think of eight children! The question of making ends meet was as paramount as ever even though now there were no more yearly babies to be counted on.

A suggestion from Panoria Permon was laid before the council and scornfully dismissed. Letizia read the letter aloud. "You are still young enough and beautiful enough to marry again. Don't refuse a good offer." She tore the letter into bits and thrust it from her. "As if a woman who loved as I did can ever think of loving again!"

Giuseppe sighed with relief. "That makes me happy, Mammina, to hear you say that. We want you for ourselves alone."

"You shall have me that way, Peppino—always. I have no other thought but you. But the present. We must live."

Giuseppe rose with determination. He was going to the Governor, who had promised him the direction of the work his father had begun at the salt marshes. It was not much in pay, but it was something. Everything would help.

She watched him leave the room, his shoulders squared, importance in his mien. A look of pride glowed in her eyes as she turned back to her half-brother. "The head of the family! And yet—Nabulio calls him vacillating." She took a badly scrawled letter from the bosom of her dress. "Listen to what he writes." She smoothed out the pages. " 'The Lord Bishop of Autun would have given him a rich living and it would not have been long before he became a bishop himself. But he declares now he prefers some sort of a military career with the engineering corps—or something like that. Why? I cannot understand. He has not the intrepidity necessary to confront the dangers of battle. Can't you persuade him such a profession is not for him? Now that he is back with you try to make him decide on some one thing and follow it.' " She put down the letter with a shake of the head and a half-smile. "Any one would think he was the head of the family. And he is right. Peppino is not made for military exploits. I know that. Better that he remain here with me." The haunted look was back in her eyes. "His pay will help us."

"And mine." The young abbé nodded thoughtfully.

"Yours! But you are a priest, Beppe!"

"I have been talking the situation over with Zio Luciano. We have decided it is best for me to leave the church for a little while; at least until these evil days are passed. I have already received permission to accept a position of administrator of army supplies that are to be sent here. With what that brings, your pension, and Peppino's pay, you will

be able to get along. No—please do not protest, sorella mia. Anything I can do for you is a joy. We must all work together."

In spite of her protests the plans were made; and for a time there was relief from material cares. Then, like a bolt from the blue, the Government closed the work at the salt marshes and Giuseppe's stipend ceased. The crops from La Sposata and Milelli failed. Sorrow entered their midst with the death of the old Comte de Marbœuf—the fairy godfather for so many years. And the Zio Luciano would not last very much longer.

Letters from Nabulio, though now fairly hopeful, afforded no material assistance. The last news was from Paris. He had finally entered the artillery and received an appointment as second lieutenant. At last he had a little pay, just enough to live on.

"Is he never coming back to me! Perhaps if he knew of our troubles he would no longer put off his visit." She sat down to write to him. "What can we do, Nabulio mio? I seem to have come to the end of my resources. Give me your advice."

He answered the appeal in person. Two months later he was there before her, standing at the kitchen door, gazing at her from beneath frowning brows. But so changed! She hardly knew him. Six years had changed him from a spindling boy into a thin, emaciated man. His color was bad—a sallow hue; and his eyes seemed burning with the fire of fever. She opened her arms and gathered him to her.

"Nabulio—you have come back to me!"

Even his voice was that of a stranger. She wondered at his difficulty in answering her in the language she spoke. Had he forgotten his Corsican dialect!

His frown increased. "I have not heard it for so long, Mammina. Nothing but French is spoken about me. But it will come back. Give me a few days."

She led him up to the room he had occupied as a child, the one on the terrace which she had given him to study mathematics in. It was now used by Maria Annunziata, Maria Paoletta, and the little Girolomo. But she would have them moved out at once. He must have everything as he remembered it; everything—except his father.

"You have come back to live with us?"

"I have only my leave, Mammina. But I have thought much on the long journey here. This is my decision. I am determined to stop with you as long as possible. On the grounds of ill health I can have my leave of absence prolonged. My pay will come regularly. We must all help you."

"But, my son, your career!"

Such a solemn way he had of drawing his brows together! He made her think of a portrait she had seen in Paoli's house of a Roman lawgiver. "My career will take care of itself. While I am here I shall have a great work to do. I am going to write the history of Corsica. You must help me. Those French aristocrats do not know we have a land of heroes."

She would let no one help him with his boxes but herself. No—not even Saveria. What rags his clothes were in! It would take a month to get them cleaned and pieced and turned. And why so many books! She puzzled over the titles while he went up-stairs to greet Zio Luciano. The names meant nothing to her, though they sounded frightfully portentous. Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Contrat Social.* Necker's *Compte-Rendu.* A philosophical and political history by some one named Raynal. What could such books mean to a child of hers! Pride blended with despair. Were her children going to take only after their father! Were they always to talk and study and read about things that were entirely beyond her! Was she going to remain a mental stranger to them! The thought raced through her that she ought never

to have let them leave her. Once away from Corsica they became different beings. Already foreign influence was marking them. Luciano had had the impertinence to write her in French and to say that he expected her to reply in the same language. Giuseppe had all sorts of foolish ideas about how one should dress and deport oneself. And now, Nabulio, with all those heavily bound volumes and his own language half forgotten. But he had said he was going to write a history of Corsica. She clung to the statement. She would strain every point to make him see this country as his own. France had enticed her husband from her. He had even died and been buried in that foreign soil. It had touched her sons with its poisonous fangs. Would it, in the end, enmesh her too!

She thrust aside the disturbing thought and called the scowling Roman senator to see the babies that had arrived during those long six years he had been away. What did he think of Paoletta! Was she really so beautiful! Saveria insisted she would be an enchantress. Like her! She had forgotten what she had looked like as a girl. And little Girolomo—was he not a treasure! Alas—a son who had never seen his father. But where was Luigi?

The Roman senator's scowl was scouted by the appealing smiles of baby Paoletta. He actually smiled back into her laughing eyes.

"Don't call Luigi, Mammina," he said, still holding the baby in his arms. "I have seen him. We had a long talk. I am inclined to think, given the chance, he will turn out to be the best fellow of us all. I have an idea. Will you let me take him back to France with me? He can begin his studies under my direction at Valence. I'd like to make a soldier of him."

She started. "Another soldier for France! Isn't one enough!" She reached for Paoletta, now screaming to re-

capture the attention that had wandered from her. "Are all my children going to be taken from me to become foreigners!"

Zio Luciano's days were numbered. Any one could see that. He had not left his room for weeks. Each morning he insisted that the family should meet at his bedside, recount the gossip of the day, and receive his blessing before going forth on their various duties. Saveria was included in the group, always solicitous, always ready with the most spicy bit of news, and never failing to cast suspicious glances at the mattress. Paoletta, now ten, had been let into the secret or guessed it for herself. At any rate, her glance had become even more longing than Saveria's. She had actually mustered up enough temerity to touch the mattress several times. At last her curiosity could be repressed no longer. During the family council, at the very moment when the united family were kneeling to receive the Zio's blessing, her fingers slipped into a vulnerable spot, touched a leather bag, tugged at it and pulled it forth. The blessing was cut short by a heavy fall and the jangling sound of coins. The whole room was suddenly filled with what looked like gleaming sunlight. The floor was a mass of dazzling gold.

The Zio's extended hand fell; his lips trembled; his eyes fastened on the shining louis; then fear brought back his voice. "Send them away—quick! Let no one touch a louis! Not one of them belongs to me. They have been intrusted to me for safe-keeping. By all the angels of paradise I swear this is true."

The room was cleared of every one. Saveria carried off the screaming culprit with threats of chastisement—which were never inflicted; instead, when safely away from maternal vigilance, she was presented with an orange and complimented upon her daring. "Tesoro mio, you did perfectly

right. Now we know there is money in the house. The proof is there." And when the Signora appeared, after having gathered up the gold, counted it, and returned it to its guardian, she continued: "What did I tell you! Will you still call me a ficca naso!"

The event proved too much for the hoarding priest. Shame of discovery aggravated his sufferings. A few days later he put the bag of gold into Letizia's hands. "Of course it is for you, my child. I did not want them to know. They will all be begging for it; and you will be giving it to them. But try to resist them. Guard it well. It will save you from drudgery. Trust it to no one; not even to Giuseppe. Though you call him the head of the family, in reality he is not. You are. You and Napolione. He is the one most like you. He will become a great man some day—as you are now a great woman. Do not weep for me. I die happy, seeing you are surrounded by what is nearest your heart—your children."

Letizia felt the past surging up about her with thrilling memories. Paoli was back in Corsica, from his long exile in England. The news stirred her as she had not been stirred for years. She felt herself a young girl again, dancing at balls at Corte, playing reversi with the General, riding beside her husband through the battles of liberation. Would it be that way again! Alas—with whom would she ride now! Her boys! No—no longer boys—men.

Her glance rested on them reflectively. Her face had lost some of its sweetness since sorrow had saddened it; it was now more a countenance of grave dignity, still beautiful—handsome is perhaps a better word—and much more the face of the Roman goddess for whom Carlo had said she was named. Looking at the three sons gathered about her, her expression shifted so definitely that she was almost another person as she gazed at each separately. Perhaps her

glance was gentlest when it dwelt on Luciano. Something in him seemed to appeal to her softer emotions; his irresistible smile; that short upper lip that was always trembling with fiery enthusiasms; his gaiety—especially with his sisters. How they adored him! And how delighted they were when he returned from France with all sorts of new ideas with which to amuse them! First, they must change their names. Who ever heard of such stuffy names as Maria Anna, Maria Annunziata, Maria Paoletta! Any one would think they were peasants. He would find much more suitable names for them. How about Elisa, Caroline, Paulette—or perhaps Pauline! They clapped their hands with glee. But would Mammina let them do it! Mammina! That was absurd too. They must call their mother Maman—Maman Letizia. Yes, he would convince her that her daughters were worthy of more elegant names. And he did. His glowing youth, his freshness, his soaring after ideals, and most of all his belief in his own irresistible powers, broke down her prejudices. "Very well, Luciano—" He held up protesting hands. "Not Luciano, Maman Letizia," he pleaded. "Lucien, I beg of you." "Then, Lucien, Frenchman," she agreed with a touch of scorn. "And why not a Frenchman! Corsica is French now. We are all French. You too, Maman." Why bother about trying to crush the enthusiasms of seventeen years!

And Napolione—also got safely beyond the childish Nabulio—thin, emaciated, with that yellow skin that she had tried so hard to clear up with food prepared with her own hands! She could not help feeling that he was almost ugly. Like her! But she had been called beautiful. Perhaps the resemblance was more of the mind than the body. She wondered. Indeed, looking at him, she always wondered what strange, ominous thoughts—they must be ominous beyond those deeply concentrated eyes—were passing so silently within him.

"Paoli has come back with a commission of lieutenant-general," Lucien raced on with details of the news. "This gives him military control of the island. We must all hasten to pay our respects to him. You must help us, Maman. You know Paoli well. Father was his favorite officer."

Letizia lifted her head with a glow of enthusiasm. "I fought with Paoli. He will not forget that."

"Then all you will have to do is to tell him we are your sons."

Napolione, again at home on leave, listened scowlingly to Lucien's enthusiasms. His lips twitched disdainfully at so much fire. "You had better let Joseph speak first. He is the head of the family."

Joseph replied deliberately: "Paoli can make me a member of the directorate of Corsica. It pays sixteen hundred francs a year."

"I want to be his secretary," Lucien cut in, undampened. "I am already head of the Jacobin club here. My speeches are listened to and applauded. My oratory will be invaluable to Paoli. He can't get along without me. I have already sent him some of my speeches."

Letizia held up her hand. "Sit down. You are always walking about." He was, in truth, with hands in pockets and lips moving continually. "That Jacobin club! I fear it, Lucien. See what they have done in Paris. They say the streets are running with blood—human blood. They have killed the King. No good can come of such brutality."

"But they are right, Maman. They are demanding freedom for us all. Our rights must be heard. We, the people, are now to make the laws. Ask Napoléon. He will tell you. He has seen what they are doing."

She turned questioningly to Napolione. He appeared not to see her, interested only in Lucien's outburst. "What have you got to do with all these new ideas! You are still a child. You were only a year at Brienne; at Aix an even shorter

time. You said you wanted to be a soldier. Then you wanted to be a priest. Who are you copying—Joseph or your uncle Fesch?"

The taunting tone of the elder brother drove Lucien on. "I am copying no one. There has never been a politician in our family. That is what I am going to be. This is a moment for a political career. I shall yet sit in the new assembly at Paris. My life will be given for the people—their rights—their welfare." Napolione's sardonic, contemptuous laughter was like a whip to Lucien's stormy nature. "Laugh if you please, you dried-up lemon. I know very well why you laugh. You put personal ambition above everything. You love your own success, yourself, more than anything in the world—more than us—more than our mother! Men like you will have no place in the free state that is coming. You would like to be a tyrant, no matter if your name became one of detestation to posterity. What difference would that make to you so long as you gained your ends!"

Letizia's voice rose above the tumult. "Silenzio! Lucien! Napolione! We are not here to quarrel. We are here to discuss what is best for us to do. How can you speak so of your brother, Lucien! Have not all of us been living on his meagre pay! Did he not take Louis with him to Valence! Do we not owe him everything!"

Joseph interrupted with his suave voice: "I have said what I wanted of Paoli."

"And I," cried Lucien.

"You, Lucien, too much, figlio mio. I think that is going to be your fault always." She softened the statement with a smile. Then: "What is it you want of Paoli, Napolione?" She watched the grave eyes, still wondering, as always, what was behind them.

"I want Paoli to make me lieutenant-colonel of the National Guard of Corsica."

Lucien laughed loudly. "Every man in Corsica wants

that! It would take all the money Uncle Lucien left us to get you such a position!"

"No matter, Lucien." Letizia's voice was coldly reproving. "If Napolione needs it, he shall have it, as any one of you would. But you know, Napolione, it is all we have to live on."

Napolione's lips tightened. He made no comment. The suggestion of disdain drove his mother on.

"Do not think that I fear poverty. You know better than that. There is only one thing to be afraid of—shame."

Napolione's frown vanished under her firm statement. "I know I can count on you, Maman. And you know that this moment is crucial for us all—especially me. I have gone too far now to draw back. In ten days the battalion here will be organized. If I am elected to the command, our fortunes will change. Once a superior officer, my road is made. Europe is in conflagration. A brilliant career is before any one who is willing to take the risk. The army is going to control everything. I have studied my profession. I know how to correct the mistakes of the old régime. I have watched those who have studied with me. There are not four who are capable of commanding a regiment. They need me. I have the courage they lack. Dangers and fatigue are nothing to me. If I do not meet death in war, I shall go straight toward glory and fame." He reached for his mother's hand and clung to it. "I am asking a great deal of you; but I shall repay you a thousandfold."

The unwonted outburst left the others silent; the mother more than any one. Her grave face showed reflection, even uncertainty. At last she was beginning to see what was revolving in her son's unknown thoughts. "You have told me much of this revolution in Paris," she took up deliberately. "You say it will last. If so, would it be best to cast your lot with a party here?"

"But, Maman," Lucien burst out, "Paoli is the representative of the new Government!"

She nodded, still reflective. She was thinking of the time when she and Carlo had fought side by side; and his words to her when their cause had failed, when Paoli had escaped and fled to England. "He has left us with the bag to hold while he feathers his nest in a foreign land." The germ of distrust in their leader had long lain dormant in her thoughts. His return brought it to life. What if he should again show himself the sort of man that fights and runs away! "Paoli is old," she continued musingly. "You tell me that all the leaders of this new Government in France are young men. I do not know. Your uncle, my brother, has been telling me of rumors. It is whispered about that Paoli's sympathies, during his exile, have become British; that he is not averse to our falling under the yoke of England." She sighed deeply. "We have had years of peace under French rule. You, Joseph; you, Napolione; you, Lucien; and Elisa too; France has given you your education. I do not want you to ally yourselves to a party that may be against that country. We are all Corsicans—first of all; but now that our country has become French—we are French."

The boys listened with varying expressions; Napolione's as grave as his mother's; Joseph's musing; Lucien's alert and inquisitive with the new idea planted.

"It is a moment for us to be careful. We must not be swept away by enthusiasms," Letizia continued. "Better wait until Paoli passes this way. He always showed me great friendship. I shall see if it has endured across the years."

Apparently the friendship had endured. When Ajaccio was in gala attire to welcome the return of the ancient chief, one of his first visits was to the house of the Signora Buonaparte. They talked a great deal of the past, very little of

the future. Some bar had risen between them, Letizia thought; or was it merely her imagination? Paoli showed great interest in her sons; any position in his power was theirs for the asking. Yet many months had not passed before she began to regret that she had accepted favors from him. L'Abbé Fesch recounted to her many rumors that were afloat; and Saveria, always an habituée of the Piazza, where news never failed to find its way, often returned with rumors that were more and more disturbing. Her doubt of Paoli's faithfulness to France increased. When a commission arrived from France, headed by Sémonville, she suggested that Lucien ally himself with them.

"Make yourself useful to them, figlio. You should be their interpreter. Perhaps they need a secretary."

Her advice fitted in perfectly with Lucien's plans; but of course they must be entertained. Her thoughts shot back to the days when her husband had invariably urged the same procedure. Lucien was always recalling him to her. And, as with her husband, so with her son—she made no protest. The house was opened to the French commissioners. Joseph and Lucien showed themselves admirable hosts. Elisa, back from St. Cyr with her acquired French, was able to meet these men of the world on their own ground. As for herself, she and Saveria had their hands full in preparing food and keeping the house in company attire. In the end, she was satisfied. When the commission sailed away to Toulon, Lucien went with them. He was sure now that he was successfully launched on his political career. And she! Well—beneath a throb of sharp pain that was always in her heart when any of them left her—was the satisfaction of knowing that he had been got safely out of a dubious situation.

Saveria was the first to bring her news of Paoli's defection. He had declared himself against the new French Government, a rule of terror and crime, and was raising an

army to defend his country against such barbarians. The whole island was soon in revolt and rallying about the old leader.

"They call us traitors, Signora!" Saveria announced in a ringing voice.

"We! Who?"

"The famiglia Buonaparte. They say we have sold ourselves body and soul to the French; that il Signor Nabulio is a captain in the French army; that Signor Peppino's sympathies are with them; and, last of all, that the giovinotto Luciano has made a speech at the Jacobin club in Toulon in which he called Paoli an outlaw and demanded that he pay for his treachery with death. I fear we are no longer safe here, Signora. What shall we do?"

No longer safe in Corsica! Letizia's lips curved as scornfully as Napolione's were wont to do. Where else in the world would they be safe! It was her home. She had never known any other land. Let any one dare call her anything but a Corsican patriot.

"Not you, Signora—your sons."

"My sons are what I am. I am what they are."

"Then, Signora—is what they say true? Are you for the French?"

She turned away from the disturbing questions and went up to her room. She locked the door and knelt down before the picture of the Madonna. Only that morning she had put fresh flowers before it—sprigs of almond blossoms. Though her lips murmured automatically words of prayer, her thoughts did not follow them. They were far away with her sons—Napolione in Paris; Joseph in another part of the island, at Bastia, with a contingent still faithful to France; Lucien in Toulon. The allegiance of each was now wholly French. They had come out openly against Paoli's revolutionary struggle. She had played no little part in pointing

out what she felt was the right road, the honorable path. And for it her own people were calling her a traitor to her own country. Well—let them do it! She would show them in the end that her love for it was a thousand times greater than theirs. Her sons would help her prove this.

Again Napolione was standing in the kitchen door gazing at his mother. She started as though she had seen an apparition. What was he doing there! She had thought him safe in Paris. Did he not know that Paoli had issued an order for his arrest! Had he not heard that the whole island was in revolt and that Paoli had determined to deliver their country into the hands of the British! Did he not know that they, through their fidelity to France, were now called the enemies of Corsica! Did he not realize that they were facing ruin, destruction of their home, the loss of everything they owned!

"That is why I am here, Maman—to protect you."

"And lose your own life in doing so! You must not stop here. Go. I can protect myself."

Napolione blocked the doorway. He showed no evidence of being influenced by fears. "Where is Joseph?"

"In Bastia—with the French deputies who have just arrived to make inquiries into Paoli's treason. Lucien's speech at Toulon aroused the Government."

Napolione's scowl reappeared. "And aroused all this hatred of us here. Why could he not keep his own counsel—at least until we were all safe. Are you alone here?"

"My brother is in the house. He will never forsake me."

"It is not safe for you to remain here."

She drew herself up magnificently. "Nothing would ever make me leave now. It would be running away. Show myself a coward—never! Paoli's messenger was here a few days gone. He brought word from his chief that if I—I,

Letizia Ramolino Buonaparte!—would denounce the conduct of her sons, he would assure her his protection."

Napolione's eyes glowed with anticipation of her words—as they had glowed when he was a child listening to her stories. "What did you reply, Maman?"

"I sent the man off at once to tell his leader that he had evidently forgotten who I was; and to say that I had counselled my sons in every step they had taken. That I, as they, had sworn allegiance to France. That, though born Corsican, we no longer wished to belong to a country that did not live up to its pledges."

Napolione clasped his arms firmly about her. "Maman—with your head of a man and your woman's body! I wonder if many sons are as proud of their mother as I am. But you cannot remain here. You must make your preparations to leave at once. I shall talk to Uncle Joseph. We will make plans."

She drew away from him, rigid, determined. "I will not leave."

He faced her, equally rigid. "Then I shall remain and face whatever comes with you."

"It would mean death to you."

"Better that than to leave you here alone."

She looked at him with the old bewildered expression creeping back into her eyes. His will was the only one that she had ever met that matched her own. Sometimes she felt that it was even stronger, more impregnable, harsher. Against it she felt her resistance weakening. At last she bowed her head in submission.

"Così sia. I will go. When?"

Plans must be made with great secrecy. Abbé Fesch and Saveria were the only ones consulted. Caroline and Jerome were thought too young to risk the dangers of flight. A refuge was found for them. A trusted neighbor, the Signora

Pietra Santa, promised to hide them in her house with Saveria until sent for. Elisa and Paulette and Louis would accompany their mother. Where? That could not yet be decided. Napolione would make his way across the island that night to Bastia, disguised as a contadino, where he hoped to find a French contingent that would give him a boat to return in for them. They must not leave until they heard from him. He would send a messenger advising them where he was and where he would be awaiting them.

Letizia followed him to the edge of the town. With her arms about him she looked ahead along the sinister, dark road. "There is time still to give up this journey. I am not afraid to remain here."

She could not see his smile in the darkness. "But I am afraid to leave you. If anything should happen to you, Maman, think what would become of me. There would be no one in the world left for me to look up to."

Days passed. Rumors became more alarming. It was said now that Paoli had determined to take the Signora Buonaparte and her children prisoners and hold them as hostages until her sons came over to his side. Insulting words were thrown at them in the streets. Finally they did not leave the house. And still no word came from Napolione. Had he failed! Or—terrifying thought—had he been captured and killed! The agony of waiting was unendurable. Each night the girls were made to sleep in their clothes. The boys drowsed in chairs. Letizia and the Abbé and Saveria kept the vigil.

At last, in the dark hours of night, an alarm was sounded. There was the noise of tramping, of many feet, in the hall. Letizia hurried to the steps and looked down upon armed men. She drew back with blazing anger. Had Paoli dared to take her prisoner like a common criminal! Her lips had already formed burning words when a man stepped forward

and looked up at her. By the light of the blazing torch which he held in his hand she recognized him. It was Costa di Bastelica, one of their faithful friends who had not yet yielded to Paoli's persuasions.

"Quick, Signora Letizia! Paoli's men have been ordered to take you to-night. There is not a moment to lose. These men are your faithful friends. We will save you—or perish with you."

The little band formed within the house—the mother and her three children surrounded by men whose faces showed rugged and determined. Saveria clung to her mistress's hands and covered them with kisses and tears. "You are forsaking me! You are abandoning me to these evil Corsicans!"

"They are not evil. They are only misguided. It will not be long before they will see the light. As for you, cara Saveria—am I not leaving you to protect my youngest children! What more confidence could I show? It will only be a day or two, when we will return on a boat to fetch you with them."

There was a clanking sound of carbines and stilettos. The torches were extinguished. Abbé Fesch led the way out into the night. They reached the gate that gave on the road to Milelli without meeting any one. Safety cheered them. Now the long road beside the sea stretched before them. One hour, two, and they were within the gates of Milelli. Far back of them, a dark spot, lay Ajaccio—sleeping peacefully. They could hear the Duomo clock striking the hour. As if at a signal, a flare went up from amidst the houses. It grew and lengthened out until it became like one of the pine torches the men carried. Its glow was like a beacon.

"They are burning your house, Signora Letizia."

Her head lifted imperiously. "What does it matter? We shall build it again—much more beautiful—when we re-

turn." Grasping Paoletta and Luigi by the hands, she shut her eyes and turned away. "Come. We must not remain here. If they are looking for us they will surely follow here."

"But where, Signora Letizia?"

She lifted her hand and pointed ahead. "Into the mountains. It will not be the first time they have offered me refuge."

On and on through the night they tramped, their numbers increased now by the old mare which they had taken from the caretaker at Milelli. Caroline and Jerome were placed on the broad, flat back, while Letizia and Paulette walked beside to hold them on. The Abbé held the bridle. A little ahead walked Costa, leading the way. On either side and in the rear followed the small band, always on the alert for attack. By preference they chose the narrow, steep paths. Less likelihood of being followed there. Bracken and brier bushes tore at their clothes, scratched their faces and hands; sharp rocks ruined their shoes.

Paulette began to cry with fatigue. "Maman—I can go no farther!"

A strong arm supported her. "Don't cry, figlietta mia. Do as I do—suffer without complaint. Our friends are with us. We shall soon be safe. Napolione is waiting somewhere to take us with him to France."

An abrupt signal from Costa counselled silence. There was a sudden halt; carbines clicked into position; anxious, intense silence swept over them. Voices came from out of the dense woods; men on their way to Ajaccio—Paoli's henchmen. Their words could be heard distinctly.

"When we get there, the first thing we'll do will be to destroy everything that belongs to those accursed Buonapartes. Traitors to Corsica! If they have fled we'll run them down. They can't hide long from us. Paoli said to take them dead or alive."

The voices came nearer. They could not be more than a few yards away now. The least noise meant discovery. Dead or alive! Letizia's hand closed firmly over Paulette's mouth and stifled a cry of fright. The other she laid on the mare's flank. Any movement would be fatal. But there was none. Paulette was calmed into silence; and the mare seemed to know what the pressure of that hand meant. She remained motionless.

When the voices had died away and the sound of the footsteps had gone on in the direction of Ajaccio, Letizia smiled upon her children. Had they noticed how well the old mare had deported herself! It was an example for them. In times of danger they must act that way—remain silent and motionless.

Morning found them in a grotto from which they could look down upon the sea; a sea desperately lacking in succor. Not a sail was in sight on the calm, blue surface.

"We must wait here for Napolione. The children can go no farther."

"But how will he ever find you, Signora Letizia?"

"I trust him to find us. He will not fail me."

With quiet efficiency she made the children as comfortable as possible on the bare rocks, and finally saw they were asleep. When she rejoined the group of men, she found a plan had already been decided upon. The Abbé was to go down to the sea and make his way along the shore toward Ajaccio. Napolione had said he would come in a boat. Some way must be found to signal to him.

"But you, Beppe—if you are discovered by our enemies!"

"They still respect the church. They know I am a priest. They will not harm me."

Through the long day they waited anxiously. Night came on. Still the sea was empty of sails. Another day began. Food had to be found from some peasant huts. The second evening they were more exhausted by the strain of waiting

than the effort of flight. But early the next morning a cry from one of Costa's men brought them to their feet. A sail at last—a lateen sail. Could they be sure it was Napolione!

Letizia shaded her eyes. It was impossible to know if the lateen sail meant friend or foe. She hurried down to the shore. At least she would give a signal. She unwound the shawl from about her head—a fringed shawl of a dark wine hue—and waved it high above her. The little craft seemed to respond. The sails were shifted. The course was changed. Now the boat was coming toward the shore. Her legs trembled so that she could no longer stand. She knelt down in the sand.

Hours afterward, it seemed to her, she felt some one lifting her to her feet and holding her with supporting arms. What a joy to have some one to lean against. For a little while she could not speak; then only one word came: "Nabulio."

The sun was sinking into an ominously dark cloud that completely covered the island of violent vendettas. She sat in the centre of the small bark, her arms folded, her eyes levelled in a gaze that looked straight ahead. Beside her were Elisa and Paulette and Louis, fast asleep. Before her stood Napolione, his hand on the steering-wheel, guiding the bark with unerring skill. She did not once look back. She did not dare. She would see only ruin there; dreams that had crumbled and fallen away from her. Yet she clung to them still. There had been a beauty in them that would endure forever—the beauty of having loved and been loved, the beauty, even greater, of motherhood. Yes, she would hold on to those memories, for now—what was there before her! Widowed of her beloved, deprived of his companionship and love, robbed of her home and possessions by the sordid hate of political opponents, pursued by the vendetta of an

old friend, driven out into the world with nothing to give her support but the love of her children, their love of her, and her own courage! The word came to her lips as it had that day when she had watched little Giuseppe and Nabulio sail away to a foreign land. "Coraggio. Coraggio." Was it not that which had brought them back to her! Would it not still bring them happiness at the end of this perilous voyage upon which they were now setting forth!

The sun was gone; only the black cloud that covered Corsica remained. In the afterglow that concentrated into a streak across the distant horizon, a narrow strip of blue appeared, shone brilliantly a few moments, then disappeared into the night.

"What was it, Nabulio?" she asked.

He answered without turning. His eyes were still following the strip of blue that had lasted such a short moment.

"France."

BOOK II

I

LETIZIA was struggling to decipher a badly scrawled letter. To begin with, it was in French; then, to complicate matters, it was dated in those confusing terms brought into use by the revolutionary government. The fourteenth of Prairial of the Year I.

"What does it mean, Louis? I shall never learn these strange names."

Louis looked up from the pages of *Paul et Virginie* spread out before him. He showed a slight puckered frown at the interruption; but it only lasted a moment. He was soon smiling into his mother's puzzled eyes. "But you must learn them, Maman. They are legal now; and so poetic. Roman, you know. Think of the seasons and the names will come quite naturally. Snow, rain, wind; Nivôse, Pluviôse, Ventôse. Aren't they descriptive of January, February, and March? Then seed—Germinal; Floréal—flowers; and green fields—Prairial. That brings us up to July with the harvest, heat, and fruit; Messidor, Thermidor, Fructidor. Then autumn with the vintage; November with fogs; December with hail. Vendémiaire, Brumaire, Frimaire."

Letizia counted on her fingers. "Then this letter was written somewhere about the 14th of June?"

Louis nodded. "And the Year I means this year—1793—when the world has started on a new era of liberty and rights of the people."

Letizia's expression was not entirely one of conviction. "If I were only sure of that! Napolione said the army would rule the world and restore order. I see no signs of order yet. Every day seems to bring more terrible deeds. I call it all madness."

She shuddered as memories of the past weeks pressed into her thoughts; then returned to the letter. It was from her soldier son. He had found his regiment at Nice; General du Teil had put him in charge of erecting batteries along the coast; he was allowed to send his plans direct to the War Office; and—best of all—he had been allowed to draw arrears in pay for the time he had spent in Corsica. He was inclosing it all to her—three thousand francs. There was now no reason for her to worry. He had heard from Joseph, now in Paris with a delegation of Corsicans who were presenting their claim for aid to all refugees from the island. He would surely obtain some sort of pension for the victims of Paoli's treachery. Lucien, too, had found a place with the commissary at St. Maximin. Perhaps delivering stores and checking vouchers would keep him occupied and cool his oratorical outbursts. The pay was not bad. Twelve thousand a year. They could plan for Louis later. He hoped to be able to have him with him and train him for a soldier. As for the girls and Jerome—they were with her. What could be better for them! She must now rest from the terrible strain she had been through.

The terrible strain! Letizia looked through the window out upon the port of Marseille. France! Would it not have been better had they remained in Corsica and endured the vendetta of Paoli's deceived followers! There at least she was in her own country where she understood the language and where there were a few faithful friends. Here there was no one. They were alone, without friends, without money, without even sympathy—for who cared about Corsican refugees during such times of upheaval!

She tried hard to conquer the horror of the past weeks. Their arrival in Toulon—a town gone mad with revolution; the streets flowing with blood; the constant rumble of the tumbril; the shrieks of people being dragged to the

guillotine; the piercing cries of "The Terror! The Terror!" One ray of light in the nightmare about her—Lucien there to meet them. But where were they to go! A hurried departure from the town and a few weeks of sordid existence in a hut at La Vallette. Even there safety seemed uncertain. Lucien with her, but rushing off each morning to that Jacobin club in Toulon to inflame the mob to more ghastly brutalities. Rights of people! Liberty, equality, fraternity! Were such ideals to be obtained only at the price of human blood! Napolione gone to rejoin his regiment at Nice. Joseph at Marseille. She alone with five children—and Saveria. Another journey across country when Joseph had sent word that he had found a place for them in Marseille where Corsican refugees were being cared for by the Government. Her arrival there to find only sordid quarters and even greater destitution. More weeks of poverty, almost starvation, and finally the top floor in this house which promised only temporary comfort—found for them by Joseph. Better to try to forget the misery of those weeks of desperate wanderings and look only forward. But, even so, what was there to look forward to! The utter futility of finding tranquillity in such a distorted world swept over her with discouraging gloom. It was all well enough with Joseph, Napolione, Lucien; they were burning with the flame that had set the world on fire; momentous events were in the making, they said; the future was brilliant. But the present! And she alone with three girls and the two boys.

Louis's voice called her back from the lurid visions. "I've written to him, Maman. Will you listen to what I've said." He picked up a sheet of paper on which were written carefully formed words. "I've asked him how much of it is true and how much is imagination. I must know. I want to be able to say: this is founded on fact; that is only fancy. Otherwise my sympathy will all be wasted."

Her hand rested lightly, affectionately, on her young son's shoulder. She glanced at the carefully written letter with pride. How much better he wrote than her soldier son! "Sympathy is never wasted, figlio mio. But to whom is the letter to be sent—the commissary of police?"

"No, no, Maman; to Monsieur Bernardin de St. Pierre —the author of *Paul et Virginie*."

She turned back to the window. It was well that some one could think of other things than daily necessities. Her features softened. For her children's sake she must hide her fears, her uncertainties, her utter weariness. When steps sounded on the stairs her expression was almost cheerful.

Saveria staggered in with a basket full of provisions. Paulette and Elisa followed, wreathed in smiles.

"We persuaded the commissaire that we were dying of starvation," Paulette burst out gaily. "We told him all the interesting stories we could think of. He wanted to hear all about Corsica. And see what he gave us, Maman! Saveria could hardly carry the load. We have enough to live on for a week. And he said for us to come back when we needed more."

"Not us—you, Signorina Paoletta," Saveria muttered, counting out the packages on the table. "According to my way of thinking it would be much better for the Signorina to go alone next time. Il Signor Commissario would give you the whole store of provisions if you asked for it."

Letizia smiled through a disapproving frown. It was almost impossible to be severe when she looked at Paulette. What was it Lucien had said of her, some high-flown phrase about her being a pagan escaped from a Greek vase to revive in our times the divine mysteries and the cult of beauty! Even the torn and patched dress which she had worn for weeks could not hide her radiance. But there was danger in such beauty. She must be protected. "It will not

be necessary to go again," she said with decision. "We are no longer beggars—at the mercy of this revolutionary government."

Saveria looked up sharply. Her glance settled on the letter in the Signora's hand. Had the Signor Giuseppe succeeded in Paris?

"I do not yet know. But Napolione has sent me his pay."

The girls clapped their hands and danced about the room; at least Paulette did. Elisa, more dignified with her eighteen years and her course at Madame de Maintenon's school at St. Cyr, showed more controlled satisfaction.

"How much, Maman?" Paulette asked, fluttering about and trying to get hold of the letter. "That hideous Marie Julie Clary met us on the stairs just now. She asked Elisa and me to come in to an evening party to-morrow."

"Asked you and Elisa! What is the world coming to! Does she think I would let you go to a party alone!"

"Oh, her mother is going to ask you too, Maman. She said she would come in to see you to-day. If Napolione has sent you money we can buy dresses and go to the party. Shall we go now and buy the silk? There are lovely things in the Rue Paradis—taffetas in blue and pink shades. I think I'll have the pink. And Elisa the blue. We can make them up to-night."

Letizia put the letter safely in her bosom. There were many things to think of before pink and blue taffetas. There was food first; and bedclothes; and shoes—both Louis and Jerome were almost barefooted; and wood to cook with; and——

Paulette interrupted the tiresome recountal: "And she said they were so indebted to us for what Joseph had done for them."

"What Joseph did for them!" Letizia's attention was caught. "Is it not rather what they have done for us. But

for their kindness we should still be in those barracks assigned to refugees."

"Joseph must have done something for them, Maman. Please find out. I'm dying to know."

Again Saveria stopped gloating over provisions. "I know what the Signor Giuseppe did for them. I wormed it out of their cook—along with half a kilo of cheese."

Letizia's eyes flashed. "You borrowed from them! I told you——"

"But, Signora mia, one must live! We had no cheese in the house; and we had no money. And what is maccheroni without cheese! Besides—those Clarys are rich. The Signore is a silk merchant and owns ships. More than that," here Saveria lowered her voice discreetly, "they are suspect. It is said they were taken before the revolutionary tribunal. I could not get it all from their cook. But I got enough to know that the Signor Giuseppe, before we came here, put in a good word for them so that they are no longer trembling in their boots. That is why they have given us this floor in their house. And it's little enough, I say. If the Signora's sons are with the party in power why shouldn't we have the best of everything that's going!"

"And they say," Paulette added to the information, "that that ugly Julie is the greatest heiress of Marseille. I wish Joseph would marry her; then we'd have heaps and heaps of money. I could have as many pretty dresses as she has."

Letizia's frown was now without a modulating smile. "You would do well to imitate her in other ways. She is a good girl, a devoted daughter, kind-hearted, and unselfish. I have noticed how she helps her mother." Then, always watchful: "Who told you this gossip?"

Paulette glanced mischievously at Elisa. "Elisa's beau."

"Your beau?" The accusing glance shifted to Elisa. "What does she mean?"

Elisa flushed and tried to appear indifferent. "There is a Monsieur Felix Bacciochi at the commissariat who has been most kind to us. He——"

Letizia turned swiftly upon Saveria. "Is that the way you protect my daughters—letting them speak with strange men! I shall accompany them myself after this."

Saveria shrugged lightly. The Signora's wrath fell from her shoulders with the habit of many years. "Madonna mia!" she muttered loud enough to be heard. "You can't keep young men from seeing young ladies. It was the same with you, Signora. Didn't all the contadini at the trattoria make sheep's eyes at you when you crossed the Piazza on your way to mass! And the Signorina Paulette—you'll have to admit it yourself—is a much greater beauty than you ever were."

"Silenzio!" Letizia commanded. Then she turned away to hide a smile. How it all came back to her; her youth, her girlish dreams, her first love—her only love! And now her children were going to experience the same thing. In a way, it made her feel extraordinarily young again.

"The dresses, Maman," Paulette insisted. "May we buy the silk? You don't want us to look like vagrants; do you! You said yourself you were ashamed to see us in rags."

"We'll see about it," Letizia said, relenting slowly. "But first—necessities. Call Louis and Jerome. We shall go and buy some shoes. Then——"

Paulette planted a fleeting kiss on the severe countenance. "Then the blue taffetas, Maman."

Joseph returned from Paris more grand signore in aspect—according to Saveria—than he had ever been. Tall, slim, with regular features and a presence that was undeniably handsome. His tall gray hat and light blue trousers strapped beneath boots brought exclamations of delight

from Paulette. Were all the men in Paris dressing that way! Was that the fashion of the Directorate! What were the women wearing! High-waisted bodices and those funny bonnets that stuck out in front! If he had only brought her one!

Letizia looked at him with calm pride. He had the look of race; and he had the advantages of education. Her gratitude to the old Comte de Marbœuf sprang into renewed life. And how full of glowing accounts of the gay life of Paris he was! It was exactly like listening to his father again, telling of his visits there during the time of the now guillotined king. She and the children formed a spellbound group about him and listened for hours to stories of the storm centre.

"They call us the martyrs of liberty, Maman. Our delegation was invited to sit in the gallery of the Assembly and listen to the rulers of the Republic. In the end they granted us six hundred thousand francs for our refugees."

"Will we share in that?"

"By all means. And they have declared Paoli an outlaw. Our representative, Saliceti, now a commissioner to the Convention, is to be sent to Corsica with four thousand men to drive Paoli from the island. Your house and lands will be restored to you. You can soon return to Ajaccio."

"How soon, my son?"

Joseph laughed. "Not to-day—nor to-morrow. First we must get rid of Paoli. Saliceti has asked me to go with him. We plan to go the first of Fructidor."

Letizia began to count on her fingers. "That is September," she stated, awaiting a glance of assurance from Louis.

"Tell us about Robespierre," demanded Elisa.

"And Marat," asked Louis.

"I want to hear all about Charlotte Corday," cried Paulette. "Did you see her? Did she wear a white lace cap when they took her to the guillotine?"

Joseph Bonaparte, King of Spain.

From the painting by Wicar.

"Tell them nothing, my son. I am ill with listening to the horrors of the Terror."

"But why, Maman! It is furnishing us with a living," Elisa commented blandly. "It has given Napolione a good position in the army. Lucien is being paid by it."

"Principally to change the names of everything in France to a classic equivalent," muttered Louis. "He now calls St. Maximin Marathon; and signs himself Brutus Buonaparte. I suppose he'll soon be changing Elisa's and Paulette's names again—probably to Livia and Cornelia."

"Anything—so long as he lets up on those compromising outbursts of oratory."

"But he's never going to stop that. He writes now that he is going to put all lukewarm patriots in prison."

"And give us more trouble." Joseph's brows drew together. "Now that the government has made me assistant commissary with the army of the South—which pays six thousand a year with many perquisites, lodgings, provisions, expenses—it is much wiser for us to say very little. Will you try to quiet Lucien, Maman?"

Letizia rose with definite gestures. "I shall write to him to-morrow. It is only his youth, Joseph. You must not find too much fault with him. You and Napolione never sympathized enough with his ambitions." Then, with lifted, authoritative hand: "It is late, my children. You have heard enough for one evening; far too much, I think, of violent deeds."

"More violent than in Corsica, Maman!"

"In Corsica we killed—but not by means of laws and decrees. There one died in combat—a clean death. Here there is nothing but what I call judicial murders. They are horrible to me. They should be to you. Tell them no more to-night, Joseph. It is their hour for prayers and bed."

She placed a chair in the centre of the room and made

them kneel about her. In a low, calming voice she repeated an evening prayer that Zio Luciano had taught her and waited for them to repeat it after her. Then Saveria, with far less calming tones, drove them protesting out of the room.

Alone with Joseph, Letizia picked up her knitting and chose a place close beside him. For a few minutes her hand rested in his, clasped affectionately. There was much of the same sympathy between them as she had always experienced with her half-brother, left behind in Corsica; much more sympathy, she admitted with a stab of pain, than she found with her soldier son. And though she knew there was less energy and character in Joseph's face than there was in Napolione's, eyes less vital, nose and mouth less determined, there was at least a beauty that was far more gentle. Napolione only showed beauty when he smiled; and that was rare.

Joseph, sitting there so quietly beside her, made her feel that his interest was centred in her and her problems. No disturbing, obsessing plans of military technic; no scraps of paper on which were scribbled details for placing batteries; no endless columns of figures that summed up available fighting men! She knew that she could tell him details of her daily life and be sure of being heard. And there was so much to tell. This new existence was filled with difficulties. She was trying so hard to meet the situation and still direct the children. Elisa had been intrusted with the shopping and the provisions; Paulette was being taught housekeeping—something that would keep her indoors as much as possible; Caroline was being shown how to gather up everything that was not used and put it aside for the poor —of whom Marseille was overflowing. She was teaching them to sew and knit, too. Louis read to them and was help-

ing Jerome with his studies. On the whole the days were settling down into a fairly peaceful routine—provided they could go on this way until a return to Ajaccio was possible.

"Madame Clary has been so kind." Here she glanced at Joseph. "And her daughter—have you noticed her?" Joseph admitted he had. "I have thought she would make an excellent wife. It is said she has a dot of one hundred and fifty thousand francs."

Joseph's smile was somewhat whimsical. "Already marrying me off, Maman!"

"Your father was married when he was eighteen. You are now past twenty-five."

"Would it not be better to think of the girls first?"

"I am doing that. Elisa has become acquainted with a young man named Felix Bacciochi. His family are originally from Corsica. He is related to the Pozzo di Borgo family who lived on the floor above us when you were a child. He is a captain of infantry, about thirty-five, not good-looking; nor very clever, I fear. But—Elisa is eighteen. In Corsica they would say she was ready to wear St. Catherine's cap. I was married at fourteen. This is her first chance. I should like you to consider it seriously."

Joseph yawned. It was getting late and he was sleepy. "I shall advise her to accept him. You say he is neither good-looking nor clever. Neither is Elisa, Maman. You know that as well as I. Have you written to Napolione about this?"

Letizia's eyes clouded. "Napolione thinks we should wait. He says a man of thirty-five who is only captain of infantry is worth nothing. Sometimes I think he has his eyes fixed on places that are quite beyond us. He wants all of you to make what he calls useful marriages. So do I. But——"

"Yes, Maman?"

Her eyes softened into a gentle glow. "When I married I thought love was quite enough."

What was the use of planning ahead in such days of upheaval! One must live day by day and be thankful for a roof over one's head, food enough for the children, sufficient clothes to cover them. No sooner was Joseph back, filled with schemes for the retaking of Corsica, than Lyons and Toulon suddenly decided they had had quite enough of the Terror and would now try their own form of government. Toulon, especially, was ably prepared to stand against the terrorists of Paris. The British fleet, reinforced with Neapolitan allies, was in the harbor and ready to succor the uprising. Napolione, here and there, seeking provisions for the army, seeing that his plans for coast defense were being carried out according to his orders, spent a day with the family. He looked worse than ever; yellow, pale, his uniform spotted and ill-fitting, his hair unkempt and hanging carelessly to his shoulders.

"You are killing yourself, my son!"

"Maman, my time is coming. It is almost here. We are going to besiege Toulon. I have been promoted. My plans have been submitted to the general in command. He assures me they will be followed during the siege—that I will be given orders to carry them out."

"But, Nabulio—are you strong enough to undertake such a task!"

His eyes concentrated in a steady glow. "I have spent every moment since my return from Corsica studying this coast. I know every inch of ground about Toulon. I know what is needed. I have written to the Ministry of War and told them how desperately inefficient the officers are, how criminal has been the neglect of forts and fortifications. If they will listen to me——"

His eyes blazed. He no longer saw his mother, nor the room in which they sat, nor the view of Marseille's harbor outside the window. He saw only the campaign mapped out in his mind, mapped out also on paper. Words rolled from his lips, technical terms which meant nothing to his listener, names of places, points of vantage, numbers of soldiers that must be placed here and there. Evening came on; Elisa and Paulette returned with Saveria; Louis and Jerome crept quietly into the room to listen in awe to their big brother; and still he talked on and on. "The whole attention of France is now centred on Toulon. When I capture it the attention will be riveted on me. You will see, Maman."

Letizia already saw. She had carried the vision from the very first. These statements were nothing new to her. They were only the flowering of the seed which had been planted in her son when she had carried him beneath her heart. Yet, now, it all seemed to make a stranger of him. There was a remoteness in those concentrated, flaming eyes, that made her feel she had no part in his existence. Looking at him she felt intensely lonely.

It was a relief when Paulette, bored with the long harangue, slipped an arm round his neck and playfully placed a hand over his lips. "Please, Napolione—talk to us about something we understand. You make my head crack with all those military terms. Tell us about the vivandières. Are there any pretty ones following your regiment? Are you in love with any of them?"

Invariably, with her approach, the scowl and the obsession disappeared. She seemed the only one who could—or dared to—scout the seriousness from his frowning countenance. With her he actually laughed.

Joseph arrived in time for dinner. The family of eight gathered about the table—Letizia and her seven children.

Only Lucien was missing. The conversation of the two elder brothers centred about the political situation. Names of men Letizia had never seen were referred to as familiar acquaintances, even friends. Barras must be watched and cultivated; the Robespierres were already friends, especially the younger, and Maximillien, as leader of the Committee of Public Safety, should be allied to them—unless he became dangerous; Saliceti could be counted on—he had already had something to do with Napolione's promotion and had promised more in that direction, besides giving Joseph his present position. How they talked and planned and schemed! One would have thought they had been reared in this strange world of foreign names and people. Every one was citizen this and that. Even she, they said, was no longer Signora Buonaparte—or Madame, as the French called her—but Citizen Buonaparte. What amazing contacts they had! There was Napolione writing of campaigns to the Minister of War; there was Lucien sending eloquent—she was sure they were eloquent, no matter what the others said—papers to the Assembly outlining his ideas on proper government; there was Louis writing to some great author—what was his name? Saint something or other; and there was Joseph associating with ministers and deputies as if he were one of them. But it did not surprise her. Their father had done the same. Nothing had ever deterred him. He had approached every high place with assurance, with a conviction that it was his right, and had been accepted accordingly. So it was with the boys. Still—she wondered a little at their complete absence of inhibitions. Sometimes she had a suspicion that they were wanting in proper respect. She had been brought up to admire certain ideals, certain positions, certain people; not in any sense to be humble but to accept and respect achievement. But they—never! They were amazed at nothing. They actually ap-

peared to consider themselves equal, even superior, to everything and every one. Listen to the way Napolione spoke of the army. You would have thought there had never been a capable commander before him. Lucien was perfectly convinced he was the orator of the century. Joseph had all the savoir faire of a grand seigneur. Even the girls had an assured quality that she found baffling: Elisa with her assumption of great learning; Paulette with a beauty that carried everything before it; Caroline already showing at a tender age ambitions that were nothing less than worldly. She smiled to herself as the conversation flowed on about her and at times quite over her head. Perhaps all this assurance would bring them success. But it ought to be modified slightly. They should be held down by some restraining influence. She would pray to the Madonna that very night to give her such an influence over them, make her a rudder, a steadying force.

A knock sounded on the door. Letizia was startled out of her thoughts. Silence fell on the gathering. A caller at such an hour was unheard of. It must mean something important, significant, perhaps ominous. No one was out in the streets now. Suspicions were too rife to risk the danger of being seen on what might be interpreted as a mysterious mission.

Saveria was told to open the door. A letter was found on the threshold; but the carrier had disappeared as silently as he had come. The envelope, importantly sealed, was placed before Joseph. It was addressed to him.

"From Lucien," he said, with a reassuring smile. "I have been expecting it for many days. As head of the family," he lifted his head importantly, "I felt it my duty to write to him about rumors that had reached me."

Letizia's hand went to her heart. "Rumors! Of Lucien? You did not tell me he was in trouble."

"Not in trouble—yet; at least I hope not. But he might easily be—with the daughter of the innkeeper at St. Maximin."

"You should say Marathon," Louis put in pedantically.

"He has never mentioned her to me," Letizia continued.

Paulette giggled. "Maman thinks we should all tell her of our love-affairs."

"I not only think you should; I insist that you do so. But read the letter, Joseph. Perhaps he tells you there is nothing to worry about."

Joseph broke the seals. Several papers fell from the envelope, one obviously a document. He laid this aside and picked up the letter. But he read it to himself; and as he did so his countenance grew more and more grave. He laid down the letter, picked up the document, read that, then met his mother's anxious eyes. Without speaking, he rose and went to her chair and put his arms about her.

She felt her heart freezing. "Is he dead?"

Joseph looked meaningly at Napolione. "Perhaps it were better if he were."

Letizia threw off his encircling arm. "If it is disgrace I will go to him at once."

"No, Maman, you must not do that. It may not be so bad as it sounds. It is only that he has married the innkeeper's daughter."

Napolione read the marriage certificate aloud. "Fifteenth Floréal of the Year II. Lucien Buonaparte, aged twenty. Catherine Boyer, aged nineteen, daughter of the late Pierre Boyer and his wife, Rosalie Fabre."

Letizia held up commanding hands. "I will hear no more. It is not legal. A child under age cannot marry without consent of the parents. I was not consulted."

"A civil contract," Napolione commented coldly.

"No matter. It is of no value without the blessing of the church."

"The church is recognizing civil marriages now, Maman. It is almost impossible to find a priest these days who will risk performing a ceremony prohibited by the government."

"My brother would not hesitate. He——"

Suddenly the anger which had flared into resistance of accepting the tidings fell from her. Profound disillusionment took its place. Lucien, her beloved, the one whom she had always defended—sometimes against her better judgment—had shown himself indifferent to her love. He had not even written to her about this woman. He had not wanted her to know what he was doing. There must be some explanation. Perhaps he had been tricked into this marriage. It was just like him to be roused to the defense of some woman. Probably honor had made him feel it was the right thing, the only thing, to do. Her own duty was clear. She must help him find a way out. "You know something of her, Joseph. Tell me everything. What sort of a woman is she?"

"A country girl of humble parents. She knows neither how to read nor write. I believe she served his meals and tended his room. Does that not give you an idea of what she is?"

"That would not keep her from being a good wife." Already she was seeking excuses.

Napolione leaned forward with an even deeper scowl than usual. "But, Maman—an innkeeper's daughter! Is she suitable for the wife of a Buonaparte? Never! Lucien has definitely separated himself from us. If he looks no higher than servant girls to go through life with, he is no longer worthy of our name. He has been trouble enough as it is. It was he who roused Paoli's enmity with his speech at Toulon. And now— I shall never speak to him again. Surely you will not accept her, Maman. Think of the girls."

Letizia rose from the table. Conflicting emotions had hold

of her; pain, sorrow, anger, deeply wounded pride, love—all struggled for supremacy. She picked up the document and read it. There was no mistake. It was all there. She forced back tears and turned toward the door.

"Joseph—see that the children repeat their prayers. I cannot be with them to-night. I must be alone."

Two absorbing interests helped her through the first days of sorrow and disillusionment following Lucien's marriage—Joseph's courtship of Julie Clary and Napolione's steady rise in the army. Madame Clary was sympathetic and kind; she was helpful as well. Saveria had been fairly accurate in her discovery of what Joseph had done for this family. His reputation for patriotism and intimacy with those in power had saved the Clarys from persecution, perhaps even from the guillotine. They could not do enough to show their appreciation. Madame Clary and Letizia spent whole days together, knitting and sewing and wondering over the future that lay before them. The former, though rich, had simple tastes. The vision of both was bounded by their children. The two mothers found their interests similar. And the more Letizia saw of Julie the more she approved of her as a daughter-in-law. She was well brought up, devoted to her home, and had a religious training that was rare in the young people of the period when the church had received such an annihilating blow from the new government. She would make an excellent wife, with her reputed fortune, for a Corsican who at least for the present was without a penny. Even Napolione, with his ambition for important alliances, admitted that; and had actually gone as far as to confess that he found Julie's sister, Désirée, not unattractive. How wonderful it would be if both sons could marry into this rich and respectable family! Letizia's thoughts raced ahead with rosy plans of seeing

both sons happily settled. She felt it her duty, now that Lucien had shown the danger they were exposed to, to think for them—even though they were both now men. And it was a great comfort, an encouraging sign, to find that Joseph, the so-called head of the family, was willing to accept her advice in such an important matter. It made her feel that she had not entirely failed in retaining the confidence of her children. His filial attentions somewhat assuaged the deep wound Lucien had inflicted; he appealed to all the sweetness and gentleness in her; he made her feel herself the traditional mother, the centre of family life, the hearth about which they would all gather and warm themselves.

With Napolione it was quite different. He stirred her. He made those long slumbering thrills of the time when she was called amazon awaken and flame into life. She found her thoughts following him into the campaign he was planning to take Toulon. She was hungry for details of what was being done. She even broke through the routine of domestic drudgery and her dislike of meeting new people, to make acquaintances that could give her information. There was a vicarious excitement in his exploits that she found irresistible.

A young officer who was often in Marseille on military affairs brought her news constantly—a nice young fellow who expressed great admiration, even a sort of hero-worship, for her son. His frank manner, his dashing figure, his fair hair and eyes, his picturesque uniform appealed to those latent qualities in her and made the past live again; and his gay manner of addressing her as Citizen Buonaparte made her thrill with the feeling that she was once more a part of seething events. He actually made her think of herself as a part of the army. At any rate, she ought to be, he said; and she ought to be helping them on with the siege of Toulon.

"Perhaps I am," she smiled. "Without me you would not have had your present commander."

"What news of Napolione?" was always her greeting. "What is he doing now? Where is he? Do they really appreciate what a force he is?"

Young Junot laughed heartily. "With friends like his—General du Teil, Saliceti, Joseph Robespierre—there is no lack of appreciation. You should hear them speak of him. I saw the letter du Teil wrote to the Minister of War. He said: 'I have no words with which to paint the merits of this Buonaparte. He, in an extraordinary way, combines science, intelligence, courage. He has all the qualities that make a rare officer. His services should be conserved for the good of the Republic. We cannot get along without him.'"

Such praise was sweet to hear. Of his courage she was sure. Did his name not signify lion of the desert! "But what do you think of him yourself?" Her eyes glowed in anticipation of what she knew was coming.

"I can say nothing more than that I asked to be made his aide-de-camp rather than be given other promotion." Junot grew expansive. He drew up his long figure and launched forth into a detailed account of his first encounter with his young chief, hardly older than himself. "He wanted to send me into Toulon in citizen's clothes. I told him I was not a spy."

"You dared refuse the orders of a superior officer!"

"I did. But I did not refuse to go into Toulon if I were allowed to wear my uniform."

"That would have meant instant death!"

"What matter! We are all facing death every day."

"What did Napolione say?"

The young fellow's bright eyes twinkled. He leaned forward, pulled a lock of hair into his eyes, frowned ominously,

and thrust a hand into the front of his tunic. Letizia recognized the gesture and nodded. "You know how he looks at such moments. Well—he sent me away; and some one else went into Toulon in citizen's clothes. After that I was made his secretary."

"He chose well."

"Only time will prove that, Citizen Buonaparte."

She waited impatiently for these visits of the young officer. The days he did not come were difficult ones for the whole household. She was nervous, restless, excited. Stories of the siege of Toulon became the vital points of her existence. She followed the plans her son was carrying out with an obsession that blurred all other interests. She knew by heart the efforts he was making to impose his ideas upon what he termed a mass of ignorant, stupid, incapable officers. Junot painted the picture vividly. He made her see her son placing cannon himself, even firing them, stationing batteries here and there—one at Ollioules, five on the beach at Fébrégas, one hidden behind the chapel of Bregaillon. He had completely surrounded the town which had thrown itself into the arms of the enemies of France.

But no letter ever came from him. Of course he had no time to write, she knew that; but how she would have gloated over a mere line of that scrawl that was so difficult to make out! Her longing became almost unbearable. The glowing accounts of the young aide-de-camp were all well enough; but she wanted Napolione's own words. At last she could no longer master her restlessness.

"I must go to him, Joseph. I must see him."

Joseph scouted the idea. "That is quite impossible, Maman. The whole country about Toulon is in a state of siege. It is a battle-ground. Once near there you would be in the range of guns."

"That would be nothing new to me. I have heard shells

whistle about me in Corsica. If Napolione is in danger I want to be near him. Take me."

Joseph tried to laugh at what he termed useless bravery on her part. Napolione did not need her; indeed, if he knew that she were there, it would disturb him greatly. Better wait safely where she was and hear the outcome. It was still uncertain.

"Uncertain! With Napolione leading them!"

She turned away indignantly, her hands clinching with determination. Was it possible that Joseph did not feel the fire that was consuming her! But of course he had never known the thrill of battle. He had not been carried in times of wild alarms.

When Junot appeared that evening she told him of her wishes; now determination. He listened with far more sympathy than Joseph; in fact he heard her with real understanding; he even appeared to consider the idea possible.

"If you were my mother, Citizen Buonaparte, I should want you in the front ranks with me."

"Then you will take me?"

"Willingly. But your family?"

"We shall say nothing to them."

That night, with only Saveria in the secret, wrapped in a heavy cloak and shawl, she slipped out of the house and joined the young officer. Junot started when he saw her. This was not the mother of eight children that stood before him; this was more some reincarnation of a legend—a woman of iron will and great forces—a goddess of war. Her flashing eyes, her proud carriage, her calmly smiling lips were all flame. The young officer suppressed an exclamation of wonder. He knew now where her son had found his inspiration.

An army cart and horses had been put at their disposal when it was known that the mother of the commander of

the besieging forces was in need of conveyance. The long journey through the night was begun, in reality a first taste of battle in that their progress was a constant struggle against the forces of the mistral. Terrific gusts of wind rushed down from surrounding mountains and swept like a wild beast out upon the sea. At moments waves dashed across the road and drenched them; again, reaching the crest of high passes, the blast tore at them as if determined to block their progress.

"Shall we go back, Citizen Buonaparte?" Junot yelled above the shrieking wind.

She did not deign to answer.

At dawn they reached the little village of Le Bausset near the entrance to the gorge which led into Toulon—the first outpost. Junot said he must leave her there. Why? Beyond there she would be in the danger zone. What did that matter! Had she not been in danger before! Arguments followed. Finally the young officer refused definitely to take her farther. There was such a thing as his own responsibility. She must wait there while he went in search of her son.

She got through the long day with increasing impatience. The dull roar of the bombardment called to her. It was impossible to remain shut up in the room of the inn. The air was stifling. She went out into an open field and sat down under a stone pine. The scene was strangely like that of Corsica. Bare, gray, dramatic mountains; long lines of sinister cypresses which formed a protection against the tearing wind; groves of pines twisted into weird shapes; a distant glimpse of sapphire, wind-whipped sea; a gloriously clear sky; the dazzling light of southern sun. A wave of desperate homesickness swept over her. Corsica! When would she see it again!

Rumors reached her from hour to hour; some alarming,

some full of confidence. The English were making counter-attacks. The crucial moment had come. By evening the roar of bombardment died down. Lurid lights showed on the horizon; they spread across mountains and sea. An old peasant tottered into the village. Toulon, he said, was in flames; the arsenal had been fired; the French fleet, captured by the English, was burning in the harbor.

Had Napolione failed!

The few people left in the village—old men, women, children—gathered before the inn. They cast curious glances at the woman that stood in the doorway watching Toulon burn. Who was she? What was she doing there? Why was her face so severe and stern? Why were her eyes so like that lurid light in the sky? The mother of the commander who was directing the siege! Then she could surely tell them what was happening. Would they have to fly and leave their homes to conquering strangers?

"Not so long as my son is alive and fighting for you," she answered with steady, convincing voice.

The night dragged on. The flames died down. Ominous stillness shrouded the world. But no news. A pallid light announced another day. The gaunt mountains appeared like mounds of gray clay—lifeless, barren, heartless. The sun shot up into a blistering sky. The calm woman, wrapped in a black shawl, still stood in the doorway looking toward Toulon.

At last there was a sound—hoof-beats. A party of horsemen appeared down the road. On they came at full gallop. It was difficult to know at first who they were—friends or foes. Then the tricolor gleamed in the sunlight. French. Letizia's hands clasped firmly. With a supreme effort she steadied herself. It was so exactly like that day on Monte Rotondo when, all hope gone, she had seen a man in a French uniform appear with a white flag in his hand. Again

she was seeing a French uniform; but there was no white flag being waved. And the man was not a stranger. It was the son she had carried beneath her heart.

She waited without moving. No one would have guessed her heart was near to bursting. She watched the soldiers dismount; first young Junot, who held the bridle of his commander's horse; the others; last of all her son. Her glance fastened on a new insignia—a higher rank than she had yet seen him wear. She did not ask useless questions. She knew that a conqueror stood before her.

"They have made me a brigadier-general, Maman."

She gathered the grimy hero into her arms. "My son! I knew you could not fail!"

He looked into her eyes; and then he smiled—the smile that made him beautiful.

"Maman—I owe it all to you."

II

"Tell me everything about Corsica; my house—the vineyards—Milelli. Is anything left?"

Her brother had arrived; no longer Monsieur l'Abbé—the cloth had been put aside temporarily for discreet reasons—just plain Monsieur Fesch in search of some means of making a living; but incidentally the uncle of the young brigadier-general whose name was on every one's lips. The coming man!

His face grew grave at mention of his native land. "Everything there is still anarchy, my dear sister. Your house, alas! has been ruined. They burned and destroyed everything they could lay their hands on. When the English took possession of Ajaccio they used the house for storing arms."

"The walls are still standing?"

Fesch nodded. "They were too solid to be destroyed."

Letizia's lips straightened with resolution. "We shall build upon them again."

"It will take a fortune to repair the damage. We are ruined for years."

"No—not for years. Joseph is to marry the rich Julie Clary. The banns have already been published. And Napolione's pay has been increased. He now has twelve thousand francs a year—besides perquisites. He says there is no reason for me to worry. He will provide for us liberally. Already he has sent Louis to the artillery school at Chalons. Another soldier in the family!"

"And the girls?"

"Elisa, against Napolione's wishes, but with my consent,

will marry Bacciochi. It is better for her not to lose this one chance. Who knows when another offer might come."

"Paulette?"

Letizia's glance wavered. "There is a certain Stanilas Fréron here from Paris; a man of forty, clever—I suppose, dressed in a way that would appeal to Paulette. You know how she has always loved fine clothes. I do not like him. She says she loves him. Joseph and Napolione are not averse to the marriage because he has some power in Paris. But I shall never give my consent. I do not trust him."

"Will Paulette accept your decision?"

Again Letizia's eyes wavered. "Since the blow Lucien gave me, I am sure of nothing. My love for him seems to have counted for nothing. You must help me with Paulette."

Fesch held up his hands. "She has always had her way. Even you lessened discipline with her."

"I know. It is her beauty, her grace, something in her that none of the rest of us have. Her wilfulness is only equalled by Lucien's. And yet I would not have her different. Such a coquette! Every time she comes back from a walk an army of men follow her even to the doorstep. We must get her married as soon as possible; but to whom!"

"What news of Lucien?"

Her proud head bowed. "He has written to me. He does not yet admit that he should have asked my advice or Joseph's. He says a man's love alone should guide him in choosing a wife. I had hoped—yes, I admit it to you—that such a union, made without deep reflection and without the sanction of the church—would not endure long. It seems otherwise. They are expecting a child. My grandchild," her eyes softened. "He wants to bring her to see me. I wonder if I can resist his pleas much longer."

"Do you want to resist them?"

Her head lifted again; she smiled gently. "After all—I am his mother."

Joseph broke in upon their discourse. He could discuss nothing but his approaching marriage. The banns had been published and it had been decided to have the civil ceremony at the country place of the Clarys—at Cuges, a few leagues from Marseille.

"And the religious ceremony, my son?"

Joseph's face fell. That was a most serious consideration. To have the blessing of a priest who had not taken the oath of fidelity to the new government was an offense against the Republic which might bring ruin upon them all. It could easily mean a loss of his position as commissary of the army; it might mean arrest, even death. Since the fall of Toulon the Terror was more active than ever. Even those in the highest places were suspected.

"Must all of our most cherished beliefs be subjugated to worldly ambitions," Letizia exclaimed bitterly. "I could never think of you as married without the blessing of the church." She turned to her brother. "Can you not suggest something?"

Fesch looked at Joseph. Their glances crossed and met through a long silence. "Are you willing to risk the danger, Joseph?"

Joseph pressed his mother's hand. "I should like to do everything to make Maman happy. She has had her share of troubles and she has borne them without a murmur."

"It can be done," Fesch stated with resolution. "I can marry you and give you the blessing of the church. Though I have evaded accepting the civil constitution of the clergy and am called an outlaw, I have so far escaped imprisonment. The world need be none the wiser."

And so a ray of sunlight came into Letizia's days of uncertainty. This second marriage seemed everything that she had hoped for for her children. It would have pleased Carlo, she felt sure; his uncle too, the old archdeacon, who had set

such store upon all religious forms; and it would go far to soften the false step that Lucien had committed.

She knelt long before her favorite picture of the Madonna that evening—the same she had carried with her in Corsica and which Saveria had fetched to her from her ruined house. She would have liked a spray of white almond-blossoms to place before it; but there were none in Marseille. Her prayers, however, were none the less devout. And, as always, they were for her children.

No sooner was Joseph safely married, both by state and church—for his uncle had performed the religious ceremony secretly—than young Junot appeared with alarming tidings. Napolione was in prison.

"Imprisoned! By whom?"

"Orders of the Committee of Public Safety from Paris."

"But it was they who sent him on the mission to Genoa."

"And it is on account of that mission that he is now suspected. They say he had secret orders from Robespierre. Now that Robespierre's head has fallen—and that of his brother too—all those who were their friends are believed to be traitors."

"Saliceti is my son's friend. He can prove his innocence."

"On the contrary I believe it is Saliceti that made the accusation against him. By so doing he hopes to save his own head."

"Where is Saliceti? I shall go to him at once."

"What good will that do now, Citizen Buonaparte? Your son has been arrested and his papers seized. And worse than anything else, he refuses any help. I have told him that I am ready to risk anything to aid him in escaping. It could be done. I have proclaimed to every one that I wish to share his imprisonment with him—even if it were for life. All he will say is that he is innocent and trusts in the law to exonerate him."

Junot rushed on with a florid account of the whole incident. It was all due to those accursed Robespierres who had just died the death they had inflicted on so many innocent people. They had sent Napolione on a mission to Genoa. He had carried out their orders. Now, all those jealous of his success and promotion at Toulon had turned on him and declared there was something mysterious about that mission, that it was some sort of a plot that was to have been sprung on the government by Robespierre and that Napolione was in the secret. Junot's fury increased. He strode about the room with angry gestures. That they should have called his commander a tool of Robespierre was absurd. He was a tool for no one. He made plans that all those who had enough vision accepted unquestioningly. As for his friendship with the Robespierres had he not said that, even though he was deeply attached to the younger brother, he would have killed him himself if he had found him aspiring to tyranny! But—he was incredibly stubborn. He would do nothing to defend himself. Here Junot produced a scrap of paper on which Letizia recognized the difficult scrawl. He read it aloud. "I deeply appreciate, my dear Junot, all that you are ready to do for me. I have shown my confidence in you by confiding in you all my hopes and ambitions. I am deeply appreciative at this moment of your trust in me. To declare a patriot suspect is to take from him his most precious possession—the confidence and esteem of his friends. The world may be unjust to me; but it does not matter so long as I am innocent. My conscience is the tribunal before which I place my conduct. That conscience is calm when I ask it questions. Therefore I wish you to do nothing. Your actions might compromise me."

Letizia, now that the first shock of the news had passed, listened attentively, yet with growing bewilderment. Junot's words, his flushed face, his angry gestures were hardly

conducive to a clear presentation of the case. Of what was Napolione actually accused? Fesch and Joseph were asked to explain the matter to her. No one was able to offer what seemed a reasonable explanation. In the end she could see nothing but that they must all go to Nice where Napolione was imprisoned and demand his release.

The others demurred—at least Fesch and Joseph. She stared at them with blazing eyes. "What! My son—your nephew—your brother! You hesitate—and yet at this very moment he may be standing with his back to the wall of that prison awaiting the bullets of traitors! Are you all cowards! Are you afraid of implicating yourselves! Then I shall go alone."

Joseph, thoughtful, seemingly unaware of his mother's outburst, sat quietly considering the matter. Junot's letter from Napolione held his thoughts. "I wish you to do nothing. Your actions might compromise me." There was evidently some hidden meaning in that suggestion.

"Hidden! What do you mean?—that your brother is guilty?"

Joseph was still reflective. "If he tried to escape it would look suspicious; it would show that he was afraid that something incriminating would be found. In a way it would be an admission of guilt. I think I see what Napolione means."

"What?"

"He wants them to find out for themselves that it is all intrigue—that he is entirely innocent."

Junot stopped his pacing up and down the floor. "That is what he has written to the Convention. I wrote the letter for him." His fingers ran through his long fair hair as if in search of words. "He said something like this: 'I do not intend to make any complaint against the Committee of Public Safety. No matter what it may decide—I am innocent. All I ask is this. Strike off my chains and let me stand

before my fellow citizens. If they demand my life I am ready to give it to them. They should know by this how little I value it. I have risked it too often for there to be any doubt. This disgrace would be more than I could bear if it were not for the thought that I may yet be given a chance to serve my country.' "

" 'My country'!" Letizia's lips curved scornfully. "Has he the courage to call France his country after this!"

"We have made it ours now, Maman," Joseph put in, in an attempt to calm her.

The consultation continued. Letizia and Junot alone insisted upon immediate action. Fesch and Joseph counselled waiting. Surely Napolione's innocence would be proved in the end. Letizia's scorn knew no bounds. Contempt, harsh words, barely restrained insults fell from her lips. Innocence was all very well, but what good was it to any one after this law of terrorism had taken its course and the innocent one had been shot down like a dog—or beheaded like cattle! Were not half, more than half, of those people who had been dragged to the guillotine innocent! Was not the world already admitting what a butcher Robespierre had been! She would listen to no more arguments. If they would not go with her, she would go alone. Junot, of course, encouraged her in this decision. He had already led her to the battle front at Toulon. He was now ready to conduct her to Nice.

"But what can you do there, Maman?"

"I can save my son from a dishonorable death."

"How?"

"By telling those in command who he is—what we are—how we have lost everything for this country that now distrusts us. It will not be the first time a mother has saved her child."

Against their better judgment Fesch and Joseph agreed

to the plan. There was no holding her back. That evening they were on the way across the mountains and along the sea. The tearing mistral was as nothing compared to their thoughts. The journey seemed endless. Even when Fesch held his sister's hand and, attempting to distract her, pointed to what looked like a small cloud on the distant horizon and said, "Look! That is our home! That is Corsica!" Letizia did not reply. Her glance was straight ahead toward the mountains that indicated the spot where her son—the son she had carried through battle—was languishing in prison.

Again, at her insistence and against their wishes, she went alone to the fortress and demanded to speak with Dumerbion, the general in command. She was kept waiting hours. When at last she was admitted to the office of the commander she found herself confronted by a war-stained veteran who met her burning glance with impatience, then surprise, and finally with an admiration that brought him to his feet. There was something in the presence of this woman, simply clothed and wrapped in a black shawl, that was different from the usual relatives of his soldiers. Her steady, penetrating eyes, her firm lips, her proud carriage had a dignity in them that appealed to this old man of many campaigns.

"Who are you?"

"I am the Citizen Buonaparte."

Dumerbion started, advanced from behind the wooden table, and pushed forward a chair. Letizia ignored it. With folded arms her steady eyes remained searching his.

"I have come to see my son."

"No one will be permitted to see him until the inquiry is finished."

"Who will make the inquiry?"

"A commission from Paris. I expect them any day."

"Of what is my son accused?"

The general's eyes wavered. "All the intimate friends of the Robespierres are suspected. Now that the would-be dictator is dead, it must be known who was back of the Terror. We have finished with such brutalities. We are now looking forward to law and order."

"Has my son ever shown opposition to law and order? Is that not a good soldier's first duty! Has he not proved himself a patriot! What more can one do than risk one's life for one's country!"

Dumerbion again indicated the chair, but Letizia, as before, took no notice of it. Her burning glance was more penetrating than ever. The commander found it impossible to avoid. The command in her eyes was like that of a superior officer.

"Do you suspect my son of treachery to the government?"

Against all rules Dumerbion answered abruptly: "No."

"Ah!"

The exclamation was the first sign of relaxation. Her arms unfolded a moment; then quickly she drew the shawl tighter about her. "The others! What do they believe?"

"That depends upon whether they find anything compromising in the papers that are now held in my possession."

At this statement she made a step forward. Her whole body quivered. "Have you read them?"

Again the general found himself faced with a demand that he felt came from a superior officer. But this was going against all rules and traditions. That a woman should come into his quarters and insist upon being told what was being kept only for the eyes of representatives of the government was incredible.

"I cannot discuss this matter with you. The commission from Paris will publish its decision in the matter."

"I am not asking for their opinion. I am asking yours.

Have you found anything compromising in my son's papers?"

Silence followed her words. With lifted shoulders Dumerbion turned from her and looked through the window.

"I am not a soldier asking for useless information. I am a mother determined to save her son. If there is something that this committee can show that will condemn him, there is a way for him to escape."

"Citizen Buonaparte—be careful."

"Careful—when my son's life is at stake! How can you stand there and discuss this matter so quietly with me! Don't you know what it means! Don't you know that the whole mass of soldiers about here adore him! Do you think for a moment that they will let a few men from Paris decide upon whether he shall live or not!"

Her ringing words made the general swing about and face her. For a few moments their glances flashed and met. Dumerbion sent a swift, furtive look about the room. They were alone. No one was there to hear what he said. He made several steps nearer and lowered his voice.

"There is nothing compromising in his papers."

Her exclamation of relief was like a sob. "Then he will not be shot!"

"I think not."

"He will be released?"

"That is my opinion."

But she had not yet finished. Without moving she continued to look at Dumerbion with eyes that were now freed from the anguish of uncertainty and which had become gravely reflective. "Why is that your opinion?" she asked quietly.

Again the general's shoulders rose. He must get rid of this woman. If she did not soon leave she would be in possession of everything he knew—and thought. He raised his hand and called to an orderly stationed without the door.

But before the orderly entered he made a last statement to this demanding woman—a statement far more compromising than any he had yet been guilty of.

"It is my opinion because—well—because the army needs your son. It can't get along without him."

After six days of desperate anxiety Napolione was with her, released from prison, exonerated from all compromising charges, declared useful to the Republic on account of his military ability and extensive familiarity with necessary improvements in the army; but uncertain of his future position.

"If we were only back in Corsica, Maman! I long for the quiet of Milelli. Do you remember the old oak under which you taught me my first lessons!"

Letizia stroked his hair gently and planned to wash it as soon as they got back to their lodgings. How feverish his hands were! And his thin, pale face, with those frowning, unhappy eyes! Yes, the peacefulness of Corsica—if there were any peace there or anywhere in this troubled world—would be like balm to him; and to her. She caught his twitching hands and held them tight within her own.

"Where shall I go, Maman? These last days have been torture to me. To be suspected, imprisoned, my command taken from me! It is too much to bear. I want to go away and try to forget the injustice of the world. A long way off—perhaps America. It is a new country. Perhaps there I should be able to forget France."

They were sitting on the beach at Nice, looking out over a sparkling sea. Behind them rose layer after layer of mountains, the distant ones covered with snow—the Alps. The gay little fishing village sprawled in the sunshine. And far off, lost in a soft heat haze, was the rocky island which their thoughts were now turning toward.

"Corsica," Letizia murmured softly. "Some day—yes. But not now." She sighed. "At least for you."

Napolione looked up at her and smiled—his slow smile that invariably touched her with its beauty. If he would only smile always he would be irresistible. "You aren't forgetting Ajaccio, Maman!" he asked with a note of incredulity.

"No—I shall never forget it. It is my home. I shall go back there. But you—" Her caressing hands left his and clasped in her lap.

"You think—after this—I still love France!"

She nodded with conviction.

His hands clinched. "I hate it."

She smiled. "This feeling will soon pass. Try not to abandon yourself to disturbing thoughts. It is much finer, nobler, to show yourself superior to the reverses of fortune. Look upon all this as a meaningless vexation of the moment. It may all lead to your advantage—to more brilliant dignities —to a higher reputation than you have yet had. At least they know what you are now."

He stretched himself out on the pebbly beach and laid his head in her lap. Her voice calmed him. Her small white hands—still smooth and beautiful in spite of so many days of cooking and washing and sewing—were full of soothing, magnetic currents. And her words! They were quieting too—so filled with an understanding of his restless thoughts.

"I have been watching you and Joseph during these past months of endless strain. My pride in you both is without measure. The way you have met reverses and risen above them! The way you have taken a place among these people who have had all the advantages you never possessed! It has made me realize that great things are in store for you all."

"In Corsica?"

She shook her head wistfully. "No—not in Corsica." The words escaped her with a frank admission of sadness; and yet none the less convincing. "I know what Corsica is now. I have grown to look back upon it with a perspective created by this life here. It is only a sterile rock, a little corner of the world, imperceptible—that I love with all my heart, but that is too small for such as you. You were born for greater things. Here—this France, this great country, so rich, so filled with people—this is your place. And it is in flames. It is on the verge of a great future. Its arms are open to you. It is worth all the risks that make any success worth while."

Napolione turned on his side and looked at her a long time without speaking. Her words might have been his own thoughts, spoken for him. How did she know that, beneath all the past days of disillusionment, the fire of ambition had not been smothered! Her intuition was uncanny.

"But you, Maman—and the girls! Louis! Jerome!"

"I am thinking only of you now, Nabulio. This is a crucial moment for you."

"Then tell me what to do."

She looked away from him. She did not want him to see her eyes. It was hard enough to make her voice steady and convincing; her eyes would have betrayed her completely. Her cross of renunciation must be hidden in her heart.

"Go to Paris. Clear yourself completely before the powers there. Make them realize what you are. Do not accept minor positions. Refuse everything that is not the best. If it is necessary—wait. They need you. They all say that. They can't get along without you. The time will come when they will have to give you what you ask for."

She often thought of that conversation during the long,

Napoleon.

From the painting by Philippoteaux.

dismal winter that followed. Had she done right to counsel him to remain in France and fight for his place! Was it not driving him steadily away from herself! But he would have done it alone. She smiled over the certainty. She had just happened to find him in a mood when he was disheartened. That would not have lasted long. It was not his nature; nor hers. Nothing would ever permanently keep him from forging on toward his destiny—the destiny she had given him before he had even opened his eyes to the world. In a way, this certainty brought her profound contentment. He was that latent side of her reaching out for expression. His achievements brought her a thrill different from everything else. His adventures were hers.

But there was not much time to dwell in dreams. Joseph and Julie were off to Genoa on some mission connected with the collection of debts due the Clarys; her brother was now the head of the family, helping her materially since he had found a position with army headquarters at Marseille; Louis had left the school at Chalons and was with Napolione in Paris; Jerome was at a good school; and the girls were proving more of a burden than a support. Elisa, in spite of Napolione's suggestion that she could do much better, insisted upon marrying Bacciochi. Paulette was entirely out of hand. She, like Lucien, saw no reason to subjugate her wishes to those of the family. If she loved Fréron she could see no reason why she should not marry him. Her love-letters to him, intercepted by Saveria and brought to Letizia, were disturbingly passionate. "I shall love you always—more and more desperately. Forever will I love you. My beautiful idol! I love you—love you—love you. I am your devoted slave. No one shall ever separate us." What could be done with such a girl!

"You have no dot. When this Fréron finds it out he will have nothing more to do with you."

"Napolione and Joseph will give me a dot. They have told me so."

"Napolione has nothing now. He is even without a position. Besides—I have told him that I will never give my consent to this marriage."

"You are willing that Elisa marry Bacciochi."

"He is suitable for her—a steady, quiet man. This Fréron is a mass of intrigues."

"I shall write to Napolione myself."

"He is not the head of the family. Joseph is."

Paulette laughed derisively. "You know that is not so, Maman. Napolione is worth a thousand Josephs. And he loves me. He will do anything to make me happy."

"Dare you say that I am not thinking of your happiness. It is my constant thought."

"Then let me marry Stanislas."

Tears, wheedling, threats of suicide, everything, were of no avail. Letizia remained adamant. One member of the family had made a tragic mistake. None of the others should; at least not so long as her power over them lasted. Sometimes she felt it would not endure much longer. Outside influences were proving her enemies. If they had only remained in Corsica it would have been quite different. There parents reigned supreme. They were the law. But here, in this world gone mad with upheaval, utterly fantastic ideas were poisoning the minds of every one—her children most of all.

To make matters worse, letters from Napolione were not encouraging. He had not yet gained the full confidence of those in power. Suspicions of him still rankled. He had been offered a command in the Vendée which he had refused. "It is not what I want, Maman. It would be the same as being shelved. I want the command of the army of Italy. I know that part of the world. I have already made plans for

crossing the Alps. That is the campaign for me. You said refuse everything until I got what I wanted. I am following your advice. But there are times when I am desperate. When I cannot send you anything to help you through these desperate times I feel that I have utterly failed. You know I live only for the pleasure I can give those I love. I dream constantly of the time when I can make you comfortable—even rich. I should like nothing better than to see you as you said my father used to say you looked—the goddess of the Romans with a crown on your head, a smile on your lips, an anchor in your hand. I try to be patient with all my pent-up longings. Will my time ever come! . . . My friendship with the tribune Barras is growing. He invites me often to his salon. It is splendid and extravagant. The world flocks there. I meet many people. You ask about women. There is an ugly but exceedingly clever woman that I meet there—Madame de Stael, the banker Necker's daughter. I loathe her. Madame Tallien is much more charming and really beautiful. But they pay no attention to me. I am poor and unknown. This is a time when only success counts. . . . Louis is going to make a good soldier. I wish Jerome were here too. There are so many opportunities—if one could only seize them."

Letizia, now that Joseph was away, read the letters to her brother. It was a comfort to discuss family affairs with a calm, quiet nature like his. His trust in a higher power, his steady confidence in the ultimate happy outcome, lightened her moments of depression. "Promise never to leave me, Beppe," she said. "You alone are all that is left me of the old life. Without you I should be lost."

One day, dwelling on the past, she could no longer put off writing Lucien to fetch his wife to see her. Continued absence had softened her heart. She was ready now to forgive the hasty step which had separated her from one of

her beloveds. And she wanted desperately to see the woman who was to make her a grandmother.

Lucien responded at once and appeared with a sweet young woman whom Letizia viewed with conflicting emotions. Small, pretty, with gentle eyes that were filled so obviously with devotion to her husband, she appealed at once to the mother-in-law. Granted that she was not brilliant, she at least possessed qualities that in Corsica were considered indispensable to make a satisfactory wife—most of all resignation. Yes, what could be more necessary for Lucien's wife than resignation! For that matter, any man's wife. It was the quality that Letizia herself had possessed; a quality that had helped her over many bad places. She opened her arms to the young wife and took her to her bosom. And Lucien—so soon to become a father! She looked into his wilful, restless, fractious eyes and saw something in them that invariably made her think of his father. They were the eyes of a dreamer—a dreamer of dreams that might come true. She yearned over the two as though they were prodigals returned to the fold. Nothing was too good for them. Extravagances were permitted. Saveria was sent to buy delicacies that they could not afford. It was exactly like days when the Signor Carlo had returned from a long voyage.

"There are times when one must think only of the present," she answered Saveria's complaints about expenses. "When one is happy the future does not count."

She settled down beside Lucien and listened as she had in those days in Corsica. His voice was unlike the others. It had a ringing quality in it that made her thoughts soar—just by its sound. No matter if he were talking—orating as Paulette called it—about all sorts of schemes he was determined to present to the Convention once he got to Paris, it was a joy to hear him. And he was back once more in the heart of the family. He was her boy again.

"Lucien," she rose at last and tied an apron about her waist, "I am going to cook the maccheroni myself to-night. I'm sure your wife has no idea how you like it."

"Catherine is a good cook," Lucien responded loyally.

Letizia threw back her head scornfully. "But no French woman knows how to cook maccheroni. They boil it too long. They make the sauce too thin. And as for eating it——"

"How should one eat it, Maman Letizia?" Catherine asked humbly.

"One never eats it," Lucien explained gaily. "One inhales it."

Letizia stared with incredulous eyes at the order to pay her fifty thousand francs. She had never had such a sum in her hands before.

"What does it mean?" she asked her brother. "Are soldiers paid so extravagantly?"

Fesch had many theories. Perhaps Napolione had shown himself so useful to the Directors in protecting them from the National Guards that they had substantially rewarded his services. "One can never tell to-day where great sums come from."

Letizia's glance remained a long time on the money-order. At last the future seemed assured. Poverty was behind her. "Put it away," she said, handing it to her brother. "We must guard it carefully. Who knows how long this will last."

Napolione's letters were filled with accounts of the drastic changes. The government was now to be intrusted to two bodies instead of one—the Council of Five Hundred and the Council of Ancients. Five Directors had been appointed. Barras, his friend, was one of them and had been made commander-in-chief of the army of the Interior. "He has

approved of my plan for the invasion of Italy. . . . I have been able to prove my devotion to the new government by repulsing the National Guard, who were determined to overthrow it. As usual I was not hit. This is going to count. . . . I have asked for a commission of lieutenant in the artillery for Louis. I am enclosing you some money. More will follow very soon. You shall never again want for anything. You are going to be abundantly provided for."

More to follow! But where was it all coming from!

A second letter called Joseph and Lucien to Paris. He wanted them there to help him and to be on the spot when good places were found. Louis was already attached to his staff. He hoped Jerome was studying seriously. The girls should now be given every opportunity; especially Paulette. She should be dressed well. Her beauty deserved a proper setting. Thank heavens, Fréron had been got out of the way! He was now in Paris, under suspicion. She had been right in refusing to consider such a marriage. It would not be long before she would have forgotten him entirely.

Letizia hoped so; though Paulette still insisted that she would never love again—that her passion for Fréron would exist beyond the grave. Still, she was not entirely averse to amusing herself. She and Désirée Clary, Julie's sister, were planning to give amateur theatricals in a room which was already being called in Marseille the salon of the Citizen Buonaparte.

The acme of glory seemed to have been achieved when news came that Napolione had been appointed general-in-chief of the army of Italy.

"I told him to wait—that they would have to give him what he wanted!" Letizia exclaimed. "But—commander-in-chief at twenty-six! That is too young. He will make mistakes."

Joseph, back from Paris with the glorious tidings, smiled

at his mother's words. "Do you really doubt his ability, Maman?"

Letizia shook her head. "Of course not. He can do anything he puts his mind to. Nothing is too great for him to undertake. But, tell me about him, Joseph. He wrote of women he was meeting in the house of this Barras. What are they like? Is he susceptible to their flattery? One never knows—with women like that. If he should make one false step now, it might be his ruin."

Joseph was quite ready to talk at length about the new and fantastic society that had sprung up about the Directory. Dissipation and extravagance were the natural sequence of the Terror. What more natural, now that an era of peace and security had followed so many months of fear and anxiety, than that every one should throw off all inhibitions! Each one was trying to outdo the other in brilliant trappings, brilliant entertainments, brilliant settings. The mode of dressing was an example. Women were appearing like Greek goddesses, clad in clinging draperies that left little to the imagination. It was said that, not content with transparent material, they were sprinkling their robes with water so that they would cling more tightly to their forms. As for morals, the least said the better. Any sort of restraint had been cast to the winds.

"Tell nothing of this to Paulette. Already she is too interested in what is going on in Paris. I pray that such customs will not reach here. You are sure Napolione is not interested in any of those lost creatures?"

Joseph thought he was too absorbed in his military plans to take any notice of the stars scintillating about him. "Though there is one woman I saw him with often—a West Indian lady—a créole whose husband died on the scaffold of the Place de la Révolution."

"An aristocrat?"

"Her husband was the Vicomte de Beauharnais."

"Why did she not accompany her husband to the guillotine?"

"She came very near doing so. She was in prison for months. It was only after Robespierre's downfall that she was released. Napolione told me of his meeting with her. He said she sent her son to the Ministry of War to ask if her husband's sword—taken from him when he was executed—might be returned to her."

"She has children?"

"Two. A boy called Eugene—a daughter Hortense."

"Ah—a mother!"

"Napolione gave the boy the sword; and the next day the mother called herself to thank him."

"Is she good-looking?"

Joseph shrugged indifferently. "Like all of them to-day, she is an artist in making herself beautiful. One can hardly tell what she would be like without her splendid clothes and her skilful use of cosmetics. She is dark and graceful—with that soft charm of all créole women."

Letizia nodded reflectively. "She sounds dangerous."

Joseph laughed easily. "Don't worry, Maman. She considers herself a lady of the great world. Madame Marie Josephine Rose Tascher de la Pagerie, Vicomtesse de Beauharnais, is seeking higher honors than can be given her by a member of a poor Corsican family."

"Commander-in-chief of the army of Italy is not an empty honor."

"Besides—she is older than Napolione; six years at least. And they say—I do not vouch for it—that she is the mistress of Barras."

"Dio mio!" Letizia clasped her hands. "What things you say! What a sinful world we are living in! Write to Napolione, Joseph. We must not let him get into the clutches

of that awful group. He is still so young. Try to make him return here—at least for a little while. He showed signs of liking Désirée Clary. Let's make a match between them. With her he would be happy. But this woman—this créole —somehow I fear her. I have heard of them—but I have never known one. I shall write to Napolione myself at once. My Nabulio marry a bad woman—never!"

The blow fell a few weeks later—as usual in a letter written to Joseph. As the titular head of the family tidings were always first conveyed to him, especially when they were of such a nature that it was better to have them modulated before reaching the mother.

Napolione had married the créole woman!

Letizia blamed herself. If she had not counselled him, that day on the beach at Nice, to go to Paris and demand what he wanted, this would never have occurred. His ambition—and hers—had ruined them both. They were like moths singeing themselves before flames. His not having written her was convincing proof of what the woman was. Even Joseph, she was now convinced, had not told her half of the creature's career. And Napolione must know that she would have none of her, that she would have forbidden the marriage, rushed to Paris if she had known in time, done anything to avert the tragedy—for that was what she saw it as. Beside this light-o'-love of soirées and clinging draperies and skin covered with powder and rouge—with that soft charm of all créole women, as Joseph had said—Lucien's wife seemed an angel sent to her straight from the Madonna. Any servant-girl would make a far better wife than the mistress of political intriguers. There was no telling what she might do to Napolione. His ruin was now only a question of time.

"On the contrary, Maman, he thinks she has been of

great help to him already," Joseph tried to ameliorate his mother's tempest of grief. "He writes that he feels she had much to do with his obtaining the command of the army of Italy. Barras was wavering in the decision."

"And his mistress decided for him!"

"That may be only scandalous gossip. I am sorry I repeated it to you. At any rate she will make him an ornamental wife—which he now needs. She knows the world, how to entertain, how to make herself agreeable. She has always been a part of fashionable life. What does Napolione know of that sort of existence! He is awkward, ill at ease, a poor conversationalist, wears shabby clothes. She can do a great deal for him."

Letizia's scorn was unbounded. "I should rather my son died unknown in Corsica than rise to the greatest heights on the bosom of a fallen woman."

Joseph could do nothing; even Fesch's calming words were powerless to assuage her grief and wounded pride. She had forgiven Lucien because—well, because he was such a boy, always impetuous, headstrong, wilful. But Napolione, her son of battle, thoughtful, capable, a genius, to have cast aside all her counsel and love to throw himself and his future into the arms of a notorious siren! It was too much to bear. She had failed. She had shown herself a feeble, worthless mother. If children, born, suckled, tended with ceaseless care, did not carry through life with them some of the standards instilled in them by parents, then surely something vital was wanting in the parents. Yes—she had shown herself a mother without influence. She bowed her head before the picture of the Madonna and admitted her failure. And yet—was it her fault! In what had she been so wanting! Had she sinned irremediably in being proud of her sons and desiring for them every worldly success! If so—she had received her full measure of punishment.

A letter from the créole interloper did not soften her bitterness. Why had she written instead of her son! Was she in such desperate haste to show her power over him! Her careful, affected handwriting was almost too much to bear. And the sheet of paper was scented. An admitted symbol of shame. She thrust the missive into Joseph's hands and told him to read it.

Phrases caught her attention and burned themselves across her mind. "He has spoken so much to me of you. I am all impatience to lay my head on your bosom—be your daughter—love you as he does. . . . I, as you I am sure, regret profoundly that our marriage has not been blessed by the church. Alas—we must submit these days to our leaders. Perhaps later they will relent, be softened, and permit us once more to follow our religious training. . . . He assures me that he loves me frantically. He promises to be a good protector to my two children. . . . Sometimes I fear him when that strange look comes into his eyes. You must have seen it often. What does it mean? . . . His ambition is unbounded. He tells me you gave it to him from the very first; that he owes everything to you. Then I am sure he will owe you much more—much more in the future than now. . . . I must tell you what a fortune-teller in Martinique read in my hand when I was a little girl. She said she saw a crown which I was to wear upon my head. When I told your son that, he smiled and said it was an inspiration—that he would make it his mission in life to see that the prophecy was fulfilled. . . . We shall soon be with you—on our way to Italy."

Joseph laid the scented pages aside and looked at his mother. Her features showed no softening response to the graceful words. "It is the letter of an intriguing woman."

"It is beautifully expressed," Fesch commented quietly.

Joseph agreed. "The sort of letter that a woman who

could have her husband made commander of an army would write."

Letizia looked at them both with pitying contempt. "The sort of letter that would please a man—never a woman. Do you not see the sugared intention in every line! She wishes to win me to her side. She never will."

Fesch reached for her hand. "This is not like you, sister. Listening to you, one would think you were jealous of your son's wife."

"Jealous!" Her attention was caught by the word. "Perhaps I am. Yes—I admit it. What mother would not be jealous of giving a son like Nabulio into the arms of such a woman! He has always shared his thoughts, his dreams, his ambitions with me—with me alone. Now—I am cast aside; forgotten; not even written to. No doubt from now on I shall only hear of him through her—sweet-scented letters that she will delight in writing just to prove that she has taken the place that was mine."

"At least there is only one thing you can do, Maman—answer her letter in kind. Let her see that you can write letters even sweeter than hers."

"I shall never write to her."

Fesch expressed kind disapproval. Had she not been brought up in the Christian faith! Had she not always bowed submissively to disappointment, sorrow, every burden placed upon her brave shoulders! It was not like her to feel such resentment. It was impious.

"And undiplomatic, Maman. We cannot afford to offend Napolione now. If he succeeds in this Italian campaign he will be the great man of France."

Letizia's head went up. "He will succeed. He was born for great things. His father knew it; his uncle knew it; I know it."

"Then," Joseph's hands were extended suavely, "it is

not for us to make him unhappy on the eve of such an important undertaking."

Calm, persuasive, kind words finally quieted her. She rose from her chair and went to the window. Fesch and Joseph waited without speaking. They knew the battle she was waging; they knew, also, what the outcome would be. She had never yet failed to conquer—even herself. When she turned back to them her face was calm, but years older, drawn, severe.

"Va bene. I shall send her a letter. But you choose the words—both of you. Write it for me, Joseph. I shall not give her a chance to laugh over my poor scrawl. Seeing it she would say she knew why my son had never learned to write."

Joseph and Fesch were quick to seize the moment. They found paper and ink and were soon seated before the table discussing phrases and proper words. While they wrote Letizia sat silently across the room and knitted. When the letter had been written several times, crossed out, corrected and a final copy made, Joseph handed it to his mother.

She pushed it aside without looking at it. "Read it," she commanded.

Joseph leaned easily against the table, cleared his throat, and read:

Madame Letizia Buonaparte to the Citizen La Pagerie Buonaparte, Rue Chantereine 6, Paris.

Marseille, 12 Germinal, Year IV.

"I have received your letter, Madame, which has only added to the idea I had already formed of you. From the moment I first heard of it, I have felt only approbation of your union with my son. The only thing now wanting to make my happiness complete is the satisfaction of seeing you. Your news that you will pass through Marseille when your

husband goes to Italy makes me very happy in the thought of having you among us. Let me assure you that I feel for you all the tenderness of a mother and that I cherish you as one of my own children. In awaiting you, Madame, be assured that I, as well as my children, send you all the love and affection that they have always felt for their brother.

Accept, Madame, the great attachment and affection of——"

Joseph placed the letter carefully on the table, picked up a pen and held it toward his mother. "If you will sign here, Maman—" He stopped abruptly as he met his mother's flashing eyes.

"You ask me to sign a letter like that! It is all a mass of lies. Love and esteem that woman! I loathe her."

Fesch rose and took the pen from Joseph's hand. "My sister—such words are unworthy of you! This woman is your son's wife. It is your duty to be a mother to her."

Letizia took the pen, her face severe and hard. "No matter what she is, I hate her—I always shall." Then she sat down and signed the letter with steady hand:

"Letizia Buonaparte, Mère."

III

LETIZIA was spending hours before her picture of the Madonna. There was so much to pray for these days. Julie was expecting a baby. Her second grandchild. Lucien's wife had already presented her with a granddaughter. Jerome had been sent off to Paris to a school chosen by Napolione —a school which he said was excellent and at which his stepson was making great progress. Caroline was also away, at Versailles, in a pensionnat of a certain Madame Campan where the other stepchild, Hortense, was studying. Of course both selections were the inspiration of La Beauharnais, Letizia was sure of that; but for the good of the children she consented. Elisa's marriage to Bacciochi was approaching. Paulette, pale, thin, languishing over her lost lover, Fréron, had become alarmingly listless. Lucien was in this, that, and the other place, apparently always restless and dissatisfied. And Napolione had begun the Italian campaign which was to make or ruin him. Candles were kept burning continually before the home shrine. Saveria complained bitterly at the expense. Candles in Marseille were dear. They had to be bought and paid for, not made at home of tallow as in Corsica.

New names began to take a place in Letizia's thoughts. Albenga. Her son of battle was there now with an army of thirty thousand ragged, ill-shod men facing the outposts held by Austrian and Piedmontese forces.

"It is not half enough for what he has undertaken," she complained. "Why is he not given the support he deserves?"

"The Treasury is empty," Fesch explained. "They count on Napolione's tactics more than the forces under his com-

mand. But I hear his words of encouragement have already had great effect upon his soldiers."

"His words! What were they?" Letizia put aside her knitting to listen.

Fesch took a copy of a manifesto from his pocket and read it to her. "Soldiers—you are ill-fed and almost naked. The government owes you much. It can give you nothing. Your patience, the courage which you exhibit in the midst of these crags, are worthy of all admiration. But they bring you no atom of glory; not a ray is reflected upon you. I am going to conduct you into the most fertile plains of the world. Rich provinces, great cities, will be in your power; there you will find honor, glory, wealth. Soldiers—will you be lacking in courage and perseverance!"

Letizia's lips curved with a smile of contentment. Courage and perseverance. Honor, glory, wealth. Her own words. How often she had repeated them to him! And he had not forgotten them. He was using them now to awaken others as they had awakened him—as *she* had awakened him.

Success was not long in coming. Tidings soon reached Marseille of a fortnight of victories. The Piedmontese and the Austrians had been separated. Turin was at the mercy of the French. The King of Sardinia had been forced to accept a separate peace. Colonel Murat passed through Marseille on his way to Paris, carrying with him his general's first report of victories to the Directorate and twenty-one flags taken from the enemy. Letizia insisted upon seeing the trophies, caressed them, kissed them. She had called her children her tokens of honor. These blood-stained flags were her son's.

"And Louis—what sort of a soldier is he making?"

"As brave as his brother, Citizen Buonaparte. He has had many baptisms of fire. I saw him ride through a storm

of bullets without a tremor. All your sons are marvellous soldiers."

She smiled proudly. "Not all. Lucien is content with the battle of words."

Arcola suddenly sounded on every one's lips. Joseph, back from a visit to his brother's headquarters, and Junot arrived with stirring tales. They were on their way to Paris with more reports of victories to be handed to the Directorate. Letizia could not hear enough details. She kept them up late into the night.

"There is no stopping him, Maman. Everything is falling before him. You should see the treasures he is sending to the government. Paris will soon be a vast museum of all the art treasures of Italy. Greek and Roman statues; paintings by all the great masters—Rafaele, Tiziano, Leonardo; jewels, priceless manuscripts, and of course bags and bags of gold. And his way of writing to the Directors! You would think he alone made decisions. They did not want to sign the treaty which he had drawn up with the King of Sardinia. He told them they must. When they finally consented he wrote them that it was well—that the army had approved the articles—that it would have been unwise to thwart its wishes. He is as prepotente as a Corsican bandit. Sometimes I wonder how long they will stand him in Paris."

"They will stand him because they must. Who is there to oppose him! The army is at his feet. It was that way with Cæsar."

Joseph was dubious. At any rate he would be able to judge when he arrived in Paris. As personal messenger—in reality ambassador—and brother of the victorious general his opportunities would be unlimited. "He has asked me to fetch his wife back with me."

"Has she at last consented to leave Paris?"

Letizia's features contracted with the memory of the short visit Napolione had paid her when he was on his way to Italy—alone. It had been a painful day for her; yet she had borne herself with restraint. She had listened calmly to his words of praise for his wife.

"She is a great lady, Maman—with charm and beauty. She knows influential people. Her friends are of the nobility. She is of the fashionable world."

"Will she make you ashamed of your mother? I am not of the fashionable world—grazie a dio!"

"That will make no difference. She is a mother as you. That should make you sympathetic."

"The mother of another man's children. Will she be the mother of yours?"

"That is my fondest dream, Maman."

"Why is she not with you?"

"She feared the rigors of the campaign. She will join me later."

"A wife should not hesitate to accompany her husband anywhere he goes. I went into battle with your father."

"You are different, Maman. There is no other woman like you." He held her in a tight embrace. "Take good care of yourself. Remember what I once told you. I still feel the same. If anything happens to you, I shall have only inferior companions in the world."

It seemed so, indeed, with all these stories of victories. Even Marseille had awakened from lethargy and organized a fête of victory and appreciation. As the mother of the hero she had been presented with a wreath of laurel on which was written: "For the mother of the young and victorious general of Arcola and Lodi."

Her cup of pride was now overflowing. And happiness seemed once more in her grasp when tidings came that Corsica had been retaken, the English driven out, Paoli ex-

iled. She hoped now to return to the place that was really home to her. But—the children! They seemed scattered to the four winds.

"Go back to Corsica!" Paulette laughed in derision. "What are you thinking of, Maman!"

That, of course, was what they would all say. Yet she knew that, in spite of them, she would not very much longer resist the call. It was in her blood. Her brother was the only one who could understand her. She poured out her longings to him.

"There is no reason now why you should not return. You must think a little of yourself. If that means happiness to you, go. I shall accompany you. As for the children——"

Their discussion ended with decision; and then this decision was changed by a letter from Napolione. He was now established in a villa at Montebello, near Milan. He would make that his headquarters for several months. His wife and Joseph had already arrived. Louis was there too. He had written to Caroline and Jerome to join her at Marseille and come with her and Paulette and Elisa and Uncle Fesch. They could take a boat direct to Genoa. The rest of the voyage would be arranged for by him. He would send some of his staff to meet her. This was their one chance for a family reunion. And there were a thousand things to talk over and plan. "And most of all, Maman, I want you to know my wife, whom you have never seen."

"I'm dying to see the créole," Paulette exclaimed.

"Hush! You have no right to call your sister-in-law by such a name."

"You call her that, Maman."

"I shall no longer."

"But you will not refuse to go?"

"I suppose I must go—for Napolione's sake."

Elisa protested. She would not go without Bacciochi.

"He would not receive you as Bacciochi's wife. He says that in this letter."

"Tell him I was married before the letter came."

"Why should I lie to him! Do you think I fear him! I shall tell him that I approved of the marriage. That will be sufficient."

"Do you really think so, Maman!" Paulette smiled dubiously. "Napolione considers us all pawns to pave the way for his own glory."

"Then it will be well for him to find out that my authority is still in existence."

Plans for the wedding filled days; and after it, plans for the voyage to Italy. Paulette showed the first signs of reawakening interest for months. The question of suitable dresses made life once more worth living.

"And you, Maman, you must have something very splendid. You must not let the créole"—she corrected herself slowly—"Madame Beauharnais Buonaparte, outshine you. Please have something besides stuffy black. Every one says you are very handsome."

"They used to say beautiful."

"They do now. But you ought to take more pride in your appearance. Let me choose something for you this time. At least a purple satin. Napolione would be so proud of you in purple."

"If Napolione is only going to be proud of me because of what I wear—he is not the son I think he is."

The voyage to Genoa was made thrilling by a glimpse of the distant island. This time Letizia looked at it. It was nearer now. The four years that had elapsed since she had been separated from it would soon be ended. After she had seen Napolione in his glory, obtained pardon for Elisa's

marriage, got Paulette safely settled, she would go back there—forever. It called her. She would soon answer the call. It was her spot in the world. All these other places were merely incidents. Corsica was home.

Nothing would keep her in Genoa, even for a day's rest that was suggested by the others—almost a complete family group now. Joseph and Julie and little Julie-Joseph were already at Montebello. Louis too. Only Lucien and Catherine would be missing. Lucien almost always missing. Was there something prophetic in that!

Milan was reached and passed. Another league or so and they would be at Montebello. Was not Napolione coming even a little way to meet her! But she would not complain. His moments must be completely filled with military affairs. A mother should be the last person in the world to expect impossibilities. Then, suddenly, far down the road in a cloud of dust, a man in a French uniform! Again that vision at Monte Rotondo. She was always seeing it when Napolione appeared. There was something mysterious in the ever-recurring vision.

He jumped from his horse, sprang into her carriage, grasped her hands, embraced her, kissed her.

"Seeing you once more, my son, after all the dangers you have undergone, makes me the happiest woman in the world."

"And such words from you, Maman, are the sweetest recompense I have yet received for my labors."

She looked at him searchingly. She felt his hands, his cheeks, his hair. No—he had no fever; but his eyes showed fatigue; his face was pale; there was no color in his cheeks. "You are thin, my son. You are killing yourself."

He smiled his beautiful smile. "On the contrary I have just begun to live."

"For posterity—yes."

"Isn't that enough!"

She sighed. "Ah—ambition!"

Another carriage appeared, one much handsomer than the one in which she had travelled. He had fetched it so that she could make a splendid arrival at the château. "I want you to appear before them in great style, Maman," he said, helping her to change from the dusty conveyance to the glittering one.

"Before whom?"

"Every one you could possibly think of. Officers of the army, leaders of the republics I am establishing, famous artists, illustrious authors, envoys and ministers of kings, princes of Italian states."

"All of them come to bow before my son!"

"And not entirely of their own accord, though you'd never know it. Almost all of them are here now. I shouldn't be surprised if we soon had the Holy Father himself."

Letizia drew away her hand. "Napolione—what are you saying! Surely you have done nothing against the church!"

"On the contrary I am making friends everywhere with the clergy. What could be more suitable for a republic than the teachings of the Gospels. It is based on equality. But I shall have to show them that in Paris. For the moment they are too proud there of having dethroned Christ."

They passed beyond high walls of yellow plaster. Uniformed men saluted and threw open massive iron gates. Extensive gardens stretched on every side. A long driveway, cool and dark under the dense shade of ilex-trees, welcomed them with refreshing shadows. Fountains murmured softly. Flowers blazed against the surrounding green. Distant music floated through a grove. And down the long avenue, extended far out before the white façade of the villa, was a vast orange-colored tent that glowed in the sunlight like a burst of glory.

Letizia's eyes narrowed. She drew back shyly and touched her son's arm. "Napolione—I have never seen anything like this!"

He laughed gaily. "This is only the beginning, Maman."

The necessity of facing so many bowing heads was an ordeal. It had been bad enough in Marseille when they had presented her with that wreath of laurel. But here—there seemed to be hundreds of glittering uniforms, gleaming swords, sparkling orders, ribbons, crosses, jewels. She clung to her son's arm as he helped her from the carriage. Then, suddenly, she was erect, proud, full of impressive dignity; for there beneath the orange-colored awning, awaiting her, was the woman she had come to meet. It was not necessary for any one to tell her who it was. Joseph had painted the picture too well. Dark with that soft charm of all créole women. Dressed in white muslin, infinitely fresh and dainty, pale blue ribbons here and there, a Spanish comb thrust lightly in her dark hair, satin slippers, and a face that was undeniably lovely! An exquisite mouth, like a flower, made for kisses—her son's kisses—alas, other men's too, Joseph had said!

"My mother—my wife."

Their hands touched; there was a moment of cold formality as their eyes met; a tempest of emotions struggled forth and were suppressed; and Letizia felt a soft kiss imprinted on each cheek.

Letizia thought the evening would never end. She suffered through it both mentally and physically. The purple satin dress—Paulette had had her way—was the most uncomfortable garment she had ever put on. It made her feel as if she were some one else; and look that way, too, she was sure. If she had only had an enveloping shawl she would have been much more at ease; but the girls insisted

that shawls were entirely démodé. And such an endless bowing before her as her new daughter-in-law presented person after person, always murmuring softly "Madame Mère." Her hand must have been kissed a hundred times. She would have liked nothing better than to have washed it before going in to dinner. Strange faces, strange names. Masséna, Berthier, Leclerc, the young Beauharnais with whom Jerome was going to school, a despicable young dandy who went by the name of Hyppolite, and a horrible little dog called Fortuné that sat on a jonquil-colored brocaded sofa and yelped at every one. And in the midst of them all the graceful, ever-smiling, soft-voiced woman that her son had chosen for wife. How completely at ease and assured she was! How she passed from group to group with pleasant words, laughing, joking, tapping a man on the arm with her fan, standing so near another that he could—and did—look longingly into her shamefully low bodice! She seemed to take a brazen pleasure in letting other men see what should have been hidden from every one but her husband. The color mounted to Letizia's face and remained there. She blushed for herself, her son, all her children. What sort of a group was this he had drawn them into! Only one face in the gathering gave her pleasure—young Junot. She kept him beside her until they had gone into the dining-room. Here the vastness of the white-and-gold room, its frescoed ceiling, its seemingly endless table made her think of the first large gathering she had attended in Corte. But the comparison was limited. All this splendor made Corte seem trivial and sordid. There the ceiling was low, the walls smoke-grimed, the faces grim and rugged, the women dressed with modesty, and—and she had felt at home among them. Here she never would. Her glance dwelt upon the son beside her who viewed the motley group with scowling mien before which all of them seemed to defer; at least all of them except

From a photograph by Alinari.

Josephine.

From the painting by Prud'hon.

Paulette. She appeared to be enjoying herself immensely—chatting, giggling, smiling into the eyes of diplomats and generals and princes as though they were intimate friends. Already she was copying the airs and graces of her sister-in-law. But it was a satisfaction to see that her beauty, young and fresh and radiant, made that painted créole siren look like a whited sepulchre. Even Napolione's scowl lifted when he looked at her and received a nod and smile. Perhaps it was a relief to him to meet beautiful young eyes that had no fear of him in them instead of all that smirking deference. She was glad to see Elisa was bearing herself with dignity, even if she did appear drab against the brilliance of the others. Caroline, too, star-eyed and drinking in the scene with all the curiosity of a girl just out of a pensionnat, was quiet enough. Julie, of course, was, as always, as gentle as a lamb. There was the perfect daughter-in-law. Housewifely instincts began to assert themselves. The food was hardly in keeping with surrounding splendors. Soup, boiled meat, an entrée, a salad, fruit and only a simple red wine.

"Soldiers' fare," Napolione explained to her. "I have not forgotten the bread and cheese you told me you lived on, Maman, when you were campaigning. It is quite good enough for them." His glance shot up and down the table. "It makes them realize that, though a conqueror, I am still a soldier."

"And it is an economy," Letizia commented approvingly.

Napolione laughed so boisterously that many started and looked in his direction. "Only four francs a head, Maman, including the wine."

She got away from the jonquil-colored salon as soon as possible. Her eyes were aching from the glare of the Venetian-glass chandeliers; her head was buzzing with the sound of so much chatter. In the room assigned her she immedi-

ately cast aside the confining purple satin and breathed once more with intense relief. Her stay there would be as short as possible.

The children wandered in one by one to bid her good night. It was almost like home again. She felt in her own world with her brood about her. If it had not been for that music down in the garden she would have made them gather about her, kneel and repeat a prayer with her.

First came Joseph with Julie; then Louis, who appeared desperately tired, almost ill.

She put her arm about him solicitously. "What is it, my son?"

"Too many battles," Joseph said, with a kind glance at the young captain. "Has he told you, Maman, how he saved his brother's life?"

"Which brother? Tell me, Louis."

Louis shrugged indifferently. Joseph had to recount the incident. It had happened at Arcola. Napolione had rushed toward the bridge bearing the tricolor himself, had been knocked down, rolled into a ditch and been saved from drowning by Louis running to him under a storm of bullets.

Letizia smiled proudly. "Courage is not wanting in any of us."

"Joseph has bought a house in Paris," Julie quietly entered the conversation. "What do you think of that, Maman?"

Letizia's smile vanished. "Paris! Why not Ajaccio?"

"I am going to buy property there, too, Maman. It is the moment to invest in everything. You should do it too."

Letizia made a mental note. "I shall speak to my brother about it at once."

Elisa entered with frowning complaints. Napolione had been cold and indifferent to her. "He treats me as if I were a stranger. Calls me disdainfully Madame Bacciochi."

"That will pass. I shall convince him that your marriage was for the best."

"You had better first, Maman, let him convince you that his own is not a mere mésalliance."

Paulette wandered in and stood before a long mirror regarding herself approvingly. "I must cut this bodice down at least three fingers. The créole's was open to the waist."

"If you talk that way I shall have you sent to a convent."

"Napolione wouldn't let you, Maman. The Republic would not have a general whose sister was a nun."

Caroline, dreamy in a deep armchair, asked Joseph who the officer was in the beautiful green satin uniform and plumed hat. Joseph smiled knowingly. "Murat. But he is not nearly good enough for you. Napolione has his eyes on higher plains for his sweet little sister."

"I shall choose my own husband," Caroline retorted.

Paulette turned on her furiously. "You think so! Then try it. Napolione will force us to marry men who will be useful to him."

Letizia raised authoritative hands. "Silenzio—all of you! Never have I seen such lack of appreciation. You should know that your brother thinks only of your happiness. Now—go to bed. I am tired—dead tired. You must be too. Besides—Napolione is coming to talk with me. I want to see him alone."

When she heard his footsteps sounding in the marble corridor, she went to the door to greet him. How much significance there was in the heavy tread! No one but a conqueror walked that way. She threw the door open. He entered, rather dishevelled, in slippers, his tunic unbuttoned and showing several stains from the food he had let fall at the table—a habit of childhood of which she had never been able to break him. She smiled over the carelessness now. It made him more her own to see that he had not outgrown it.

He slumped down on the sofa and reached for her hand. But before she sat beside him she fetched a towel and tried to remove the food stains.

"If you had been eating maccheroni this gorgeous uniform would have been ruined."

Napolione watched her affectionately. "Josephine never does this for me, Maman."

"Wives never do. Grazie a dio—they leave something for mothers!"

She placed a pillow behind his head; then took her place beside him. If she had only had her knitting with her the moment would have been perfect. She hated so for her hands to be idle.

"Such pretty hands," he said, fondling them. "Prettier than Josephine's." Was he always going to drag in that hated name! "They say mine are like yours; small and fine, not those of a soldier. My feet, too. They laugh at them. You know they still call me the little corporal. Have you noticed how they bow to me—trying to get down to my level!"

"No one will ever measure you by your physical height, my son."

He yawned with pleasant relaxation. There was so much he wanted to say to her. Had she noticed that evening young Leclerc! He was one of the coming men; he had known him since Toulon; he was of an excellent French family from Pontoise.

"Why should I have noticed him?"

"Because I have chosen him for Paulette's husband."

Letizia's interest awakened. "If you can do anything with her, do it at once. She is a constant fear for me. Her beauty is a veritable curse. The sooner she is married the better. But—this Leclerc. Will he not expect a huge dot?"

"I am prepared to give her fifty thousand louis—and him my friendship."

"Buon dio, Napolione! Where does all this gold come from?"

"That is nothing, Maman. Only recently the Duke of Modena offered me four million for my protection—which I refused."

"Then you can give Elisa a dot too. They have nothing."

That was quite different. She had married against his wishes.

"But with my approval. You must forgive her—for my sake. No matter if you have never loved her as Paulette, she is your sister. And I should like you to give Bacciochi an appointment in Corsica. Could you not make him commander of the citadel at Ajaccio? Then they could be there with me."

Napolione stiffened perceptibly. He had come there to tell her of *his* plans. Instead, she was recounting *hers.*

Her frown was suddenly equal to his. He had come by his scowl honestly. "And what more fitting than that a son should listen to his mother's suggestions! Have you not always done so! Do you think, because all these plumed sycophants grovel before you, I shall too!"

He tried to reach for her hand. She withheld it. "If I ever saw you grovel, Maman, my faith in my destiny would be gone forever. I am only trying to plan what I think is best for us all. I am so ambitious for every member of my family. Joseph has a great future. I am making him my representative in every important matter. He is the only one I really trust. Nature has given him a heart that is always kind and gentle. He is full of good qualities. I love him. I am sending him back to Paris soon with letters to Barras suggesting that he be made ambassador to Rome. He can be most useful to me there."

"And Lucien—what are you doing for him?"

The scowl was back again. "Hair-brained rascal! What

can any one do for him! I sent him with letters to Carnot and he was given a position with the army of the Rhine. This bored him. Everything I suggest bores him. I have decided there is only one thing to do—send him back to Corsica. He ought to be out of mischief there. You can watch over him."

"That will be happiness for me. I love his wife. She was the first to make me a grandmother."

"Louis will return with me to Paris; Jerome and Caroline too."

"And I?" Letizia's eyes were wistful. "In all your plans what have you thought of for your mother?"

"Maman—I want you to be happy, comfortable, free from all care. What would make me happiest would be to have you always with me. But—you do not love Josephine. I saw that to-night. Is it impossible for you to think of her as your daughter?"

Letizia rose and turned toward the window. Just beneath her the orange-colored awning was glowing with lights beneath it. There was the sound of many voices, music, laughter—all subdued and floating softly through the warm, purple shadows of the night, yet strangely like the far-off murmur of torrents. A lilting murmur rose above the other sounds—musical, sweet, shallow laughter. Letizia recognized it and shut her eyes with a spasm of pain. It embodied everything that had come between her and her son.

"I shall go back to Corsica, Nabulio. You do not need me any longer."

First a cloud on the rippling emerald-green sea; then a sharp outline, jagged, knifelike; finally grim mountains so softened by translucent shades of gray and blue and amethyst that they became like imaginary fortresses. The thrill was confused with intense suffering. Corsica—after four

years! Could it be possible! Over there, beyond the towering peak of Monte Rotondo, hidden away in the golden sunlight, was Corte. Now they were passing Cargese. Soon Ajaccio would be in sight.

Letizia walked away from the others, chose a place beside the rail, pressed her hands tight against her bosom, and stared before her. The moment was one that stood out from years. She was returning to what she loved—her home; but she was returning to it—ah, so different! It could never be again what it had been. In spite of her brother, Elisa and her husband—and Lucien already there awaiting her—she felt desperately lonely. The vision of the island brought back scenes of Carlo and her youth. Both gone. And so many of her loved ones scattered over the world. Paulette at last safely married to Leclerc—a union blessed by the church to which Napolione had consented at her insistence, though the ceremony had been performed secretly. Encouraged by this success, she had pled with him to have his own marriage sanctioned by religion. But there she had failed. He had been strengthened in his refusal by the créole, who had dismissed the suggestion with a frivolous answer: "Such things are now out of fashion." Caroline and Jerome were back at school in Paris. Joseph was on his way to Rome as ambassador. Louis had been promoted and was following his brother's training for a military career. Napolione was in Paris dictating to dictators. Would the home ever be the same again! No—that was impossible. Her glance fastened on the familiar coast-line. But it could be a home for them to return to when they were tired of so much ambition. That was her mission now. She lifted her head with resolution.

How small Ajaccio looked! She remembered it as a big town. Now it seemed only a sleepy little group of houses. Even the road that led from the Parata up into town used

to be an endless distance, so steep, so crowded with houses. Now it was only a few steps. And the campanile of the Duomo! Surely it had shrunk. Its yellow plaster could hardly be seen. Formerly it had towered up into the heavens. What could have happened! Was the change in her alone! Had four years made everything dwindle into insignificance! Had some intuition counselled her when she had told Napolione it was too small a place for him! But it should not be too small for her. The very roots of her being were there.

She found Lucien's eager face beaming at her from the crowd gathered near the sea-wall. There was sweet Catherine beside him. There was Costa of Bastelica too. What a different greeting from the tragic farewell of the past! But why were there so many people on the sea-wall! What was the meaning of all those wreaths and flowers! The whole town appeared in festal attire. It was exactly like the festa of the Assunzione—like the day when she had hurried home from mass to give her son of battle to the world.

"It is all in honor of your return, Maman," Lucien exclaimed. "People have come from all over the island, from high up in the mountains, from as far away as Corte."

She drew her shawl about her as if to hide from the throng that pressed about them. "Why honor me! What have I done!"

"You are the mother of the man that has led France to great victories."

Her head lifted, she threw back the shawl, she walked forward with impressive dignity. This was no time for shyness. She must show herself worthy of this reflected glory. Peasants pressed about her, kissed her hands, threw flowers before her, cheered her as she passed. Familiar faces appeared out of the throng; familiar houses; familiar trappings. Her heart expanded. Her eyes glowed. How she

loved them all; their rugged, dark faces; their gay handkerchiefs; their broad-brimmed hats; their patched velvet breeches; their warm blood; their stilettos! How much more real men and women they were than those satin-clad, plumed sycophants her son had gathered about him! If he only had such followers as these there would be no end to his path of glory.

"Where are we going, Lucien? This is not the way to our house."

"Alas, Maman, our house is in ruins! We are taking you to the place where Catherine and I are living."

"Not yet, my son. Later. First I must see the house in which you were all born."

"It is in ruins."

"It will not be so long. Have I not come back to rebuild it!"

Nothing would persuade her from her purpose. She led the way; the others followed. Even after she had stood a long time before the wrecked building, gazing through its yawning, empty doors and windows as if transfixed, she still pressed forward. She must enter and see for herself. Crumbling, débris-covered steps; smoke-grimed walls; the utterly unrecognizable kitchen; filthy rooms did not deter her. She looked about with keen appraising eyes. No detail escaped her. Only once did she stop and appear lost in reflection—this when she stood in the little room she had given to her little son to study in undisturbed. The four bare walls apparently held something that chained her attention. Was it there the seeds had been planted which were now bursting into such gorgeous blossom!

"He wants me to restore everything," she said to Lucien. "He has given me unlimited gold. We must begin at once."

So obsessed was she with the idea that her whole mission in life was now to rebuild upon the ashes of her home that

they could persuade her to talk of nothing else during the whole glowing afternoon. She showed obvious relief when Bacciochi and Elisa went off to inspect their quarters in the citadel. She had won out there over Napolione's disfavor. He had had his brother-in-law appointed to the position she had sought for him. With them out of the house she felt free to begin work. Saveria was sent out to let it be known that she would need all the workmen procurable at once, masons, carpenters, ironmongers. There would be plenty of work for all of them; that is if they showed themselves capable of working rapidly. She would like them to begin early the next morning. Not a day was to be wasted. She was in a frenzy of haste. The workmen who appeared slow in accepting her directions—or who debated this and that difficulty, the need of materials, illustrating the problem with outstretched palms—were roundly chided for not being as lively as the French.

"How can I have the house in readiness for my son if you talk so much and forever advance difficulties!"

"Ah—is the Signora Madre's great son coming to Corsica?"

"Of course he is. Do you imagine he would so soon forget the place where he was born!"

The evening was spent in writing letters. Both Fesch and Lucien were commanded, and none too gently, to write them for her. She sat enthroned in a deep armchair in the middle of the room and dictated her orders with all the assurance of a Roman general. Her features had already assumed a look of command that she had taken upon herself that day. Lucien, looking at her, said he could see Napolione talking to the whole five Directors.

Tiles for the roof, sacks of plaster, bricks must be ordered at once from Marseille or Genoa, whichever was the quickest, she did not care which. If there was no boat sailing at once, one must be chartered. She particularly wanted

an iron grille for the staircase. Where could that be found! The rooms must be covered with painted papers, red and white, blue, jonquil yellow—yes, above all, jonquil yellow, exactly the shade she had seen in that villa where her son had held his court. She would ask Madame Clary to buy them for her in Marseille. Paper, curtains, valances with long tassels and gilded frames, a set of chairs for the salon —six straight and two with arms—to be covered with brocade in the same jonquil shade. And a clock and candlesticks for each room. If her son should bring his wife with him, she would find her husband's family lived in as great style as she.

"And with that letter to Madame Clary send a sack of chestnuts. Tell her they come from Milelli. I have often told her of our villa there."

Lucien protested. A sack of chestnuts! Was that not too simple a gift from one who was commanding furnishings for a signorile palace!

"She is rich. It is the thought that counts with women like her. Besides, I must not waste a soldo."

"But you said Napolione had given you untold gold."

"He has. But who knows how long it will last—or if there will be any more coming from the same source!"

The letters were written and sealed. They were to be sent off the next day on the boat that had brought her home. Lucien pushed aside the writing materials and stretched his hands above his head.

"One more letter, my son."

"Another! Surely you have ordered enough for one day. I never expected to see you extravagant, Maman."

"You never will. One who has known poverty as many years as I could never be extravagant. This letter is to be from your wife to Napolione."

"A letter from Catherine to Napolione! But he has never acknowledged her as my wife."

"It is for that reason that she must write to him now. See what he is doing for all the others. I do not intend that you shall be left out in the cold."

The family scowl appeared on Lucien's face. "I can get along by myself. I don't want his help."

"I am not so sure of that. At any rate—write."

He picked up the pen sulkily. Letizia leaned back in her chair. She had been thinking of this letter for a long time; ever since that trying fortnight at Montebello. The words were ready on her lips.

"My dear brother——"

Lucien held the pen poised. "He said he would never let her call him brother."

Letizia nodded; and continued: "I hope that you will now permit me to call you brother. How I wish you could see the little daughter of mine that was born at the time when you were so angry with us! I am sure she would soon wipe out all the sorrow my marriage caused you. In another month I shall have my second child—a son, I am sure, the first grandson of your illustrious father. We have already decided to make a soldier of him. For that reason I wish to give him your name and ask you to be his godfather. Our mother will be his godmother. Surely you will not refuse me this joy. Do not despise us because we are poor for, after all, you are our brother, you are the uncle of our children, and we love you more than any fortune. I hope the day is not far off when my husband and I shall have occasion to prove to you our deep devotion."

Lucien threw down the pen and rose. "I will not send such a letter. It is ignominious. You write to him as if he were God."

"Don't be sacrilegious. We all have to write letters at times that make the blood boil. I know whereof I speak. Now call Catherine and have her sign it."

Lucien hesitated through a short silence, then called his wife. Catherine obeyed the command without questions. The letter was dried and sealed and placed with those that were to be despatched the next morning.

When the candles were snuffed and the house had settled down to quiet, Letizia opened her door and went noiselessly along the corridor. At the street door she stopped and drew back into the shadows. There was Saveria, standing in the middle of the street, with a crowd about her. Open mouths and gleaming eyes were evidence enough of what they were hearing. Saveria was enjoying a fame equal to that of her mistress. Accounts of the Terror in Toulon and Marseille; descriptions of that strange country across the blue sea; glowing pæans of the adventures of the Buonapartes—especially of their brilliance at Montebello—were being sung with effective dramatic fervor.

Letizia drew her shawl over her head and tried to slip by the group unnoticed. But she had not gone far along the still, dark street before Saveria had overtaken her. She felt her hand clasped and held as it had not been for many, many long years. It was exactly as if it were that morning when they had gone to mass.

They walked without speaking, Letizia leading the way. Saveria, beside her, asked no direction. She seemed to know as well as her mistress their ultimate destination. The little square of acacia-trees finally appeared; and then the deserted house with its empty doors, empty windows, empty hearth. Letizia's hand tightened in Saveria's. For a moment she shuddered. The task she had set herself suddenly appeared gigantic. There was so little to begin with. So much had gone forever.

"But I can do it, Saveria. I can. I will."

"What, Signora Madre?"

"Rebuild my home."

BOOK III

I

News travelled fast—even to far-away Corsica. Distance, perhaps, lent it enchantment. Letizia, in the midst of rebuilding her home, stopped only long enough to grasp at the vicarious thrills that reached her through letters and by word of mouth. Stirring events were no longer a part of her daily life. Branches of almond blossoms, golden sprays of broom, pink and white oleanders, sweet smelling mint and thyme and sage, placed before the picture of the Madonna—and before the statue in the Duomo—were evidence of her thankfulness for the peace that had come to her. High time that contentment should come to her, she thought. Forty years had surged over her and left its marks; but the scars were more deeply etched in her heart than on her features. There was still beauty in her eyes—they were as clear and glowing as ever; her lips were more smiling than they had been for many years; and the quiet dignity was more impressive than ever. "You are more beautiful than you were as a girl," her brother told her, "for now you have the beauty that comes from within—from experience—from having borne sorrows and overcome them."

"Sometimes I fear so much happiness," she answered. "It is more than I deserve. I am much too proud of my children. I pray every day that I shall not be punished for my joy in them. If this happiness may only last!"

Saveria was inclined to find simple existence dull after so many adventures in foreign lands. She was always seeking some excuse to create excitement in the long, eventless days. She became an habituée of the port. Whenever a sail was

sighted she was the first to rush down to the sea wall and gather news from sailors who came from that far-away world. What was going on in France! Who was the ruler in Paris! What news of General Buonaparte! She never returned empty handed. Rumors, rushing in a torrent of words from her lips, gathered impetus and dramatic intensity when repeated by her to the Signora Madre. "I Signori Direttori have presented a glorious flag to the Army of Italy! That means they have given it to Il Signor Generale! On it was written," here she assumed an important pose: " 'The Army of Italy took fifty thousand prisoners —one hundred and seventy flags—five hundred pieces of siege artillery—sixty cannons!' " She stopped to draw in a long breath and rushed on: " 'The Army won eighteen pitched battles and sixty-seven combats!' "

Letizia stopped in her ceaseless supervision of careless workmen to listen and nod approvingly. "It is time they were beginning to appreciate what he has done for them. What would France be without him!"

But surely they had already done a great deal for him! Was not all this money that the Signora Madre was throwing away on rebuilding her house——

Letizia's hand rose in a warning of silence. It was not necessary to let all these worthless workmen know that she had unlimited funds. Already they were inclined to make her pay double what the work was worth.

The letters, which only came at long intervals, were read over and over, first to herself then to Lucien and her brother. Paulette's came now from Milan where she was established with her husband and where her son had been born. Dermide. A third grandchild. Paulette with a baby! One could hardly believe it possible. Could it be as pretty as its mother! Joseph's tidings arrived from Rome, from the Palazzo Orsini, where he had established his embassy. His

letters were full of news. Caroline was with them on a visit and had been presented with Julie in a private audience to the Holy Father. They were being received with great honors everywhere, invited to dinners in wonderful old palaces, given balls by all the ancient Roman nobility. Caroline and Désirée, Julie's sister, were being showered with attentions. The embassy was overflowing with princes, cardinals, artists, men of letters. Nothing seemed too good for the Citizen Buonaparte, Ambassador of the Republic, brother of the great General. But tragedy soon thrust itself into all this splendor. General Duphot, one of the Embassy staff, had shown himself too anxious to encourage patriots who wanted to throw off the yoke of the Papal States and create a republic like France. His efforts had ended in an uprising, he and his followers had been attacked by a mob loyal to the Pope, and he himself had been killed at the gates of the Embassy. This meant that Joseph, whose Embassy had been violated, must break off all relations with the Holy See and leave Rome. This he did at once and immediately afterward French troops occupied the Papal States and the Roman republic was proclaimed.

Letizia was greatly troubled at these tidings. It was not like Joseph to permit such things to happen. He had always shown such devotion to the church. What would they think in Paris! What would Napolione say!

Lucien smiled significantly. "He will say that he is opposed to such drastic steps; that it was all the inspiration of Barras and the Directorate. And yet he will do nothing to interfere with the new Roman republic. It is all a part of his scheme."

"Lucien! What are you saying! He told me himself he wanted to make friends with the clergy—that he wanted all Catholics to support the Republic."

"Of course he does, Maman. But he wants the whole world made republican first."

"I shall write and ask him. You will see that you are misjudging him."

However, Napolione did not even mention the incident in his letters. He only spoke now of a great campaign he was planning for the invasion of Egypt. He seemed to think of nothing else but that and plans for the family he was to leave for such a long time. Joseph, as head of the family, was to be left in charge of everything. He would send his mother all the money she might need. She must not hesitate to let him know her wishes. Josephine was not sailing with him. She would join him later. He was taking Louis and Eugene de Beauharnais with him. It would be wonderful training for them. "I have counselled Joseph and my wife to be careful in everything they say. Whatever now emanates from my relatives is at once believed to be inspired by me. For that reason all of you should be guarded in your words. Try to convince Lucien of the importance of this. We are all surrounded by enemies. They are all seeking incriminating information."

"Why Egypt?" Letizia asked with saddened heart. "Is not France great enough for him!"

Lucien laughed. "Napolione has always been fond of reading ancient history. Alexander wept because there were no more worlds to conquer."

Ambition! It was like a poison. It got into the blood, made one see all sorts of fantastic things, carried one off to the ends of the earth—Egypt. It had been that way with Carlo. And now it was robbing her boys of happiness and contentment. Why couldn't they be like her, satisfied to live peacefully and quietly about a calming hearth! She sighed deeply and tried not to dwell too much on their disturbing dreams. She would think only of her home which she would make into a sanctuary to which they could return some day —all of them.

The iron staircase was in place now. It gave the hall a quite signorile aspect. The jonquil-colored brocade in the salone was entirely satisfactory. Of course it was not nearly so gorgeous as that at Montebello; but for Corsica it was qualche cosa. Already people from as far away as Corte were coming to see it, touch it, rub their hands wonderingly over its glistening surface. And there was still work awaiting her at Milelli. Napolione had said he particularly wanted the country place put into habitable condition. Also there were serious questions to be decided with regard to investing the money which was not spent; for even with all these restorations there was apparently going to be a large sum left over. She and her brother spent long hours discussing investments. He was showing himself to be more of a financier than priest. They bought property together; a vineyard at Torre Vecchia, another at Vitullo, and still another at Maria Stella—and land right in the heart of Ajaccio.

"We can do nothing better than buy land," Letizia said. "Madame Clary writes me that I should invest in jewels. I do not agree with her. Land is a necessity—jewels are a luxury. And I feel that I should help some of these poor Corsicans—I mean when they show themselves industrious and worthy of trust. I had a long talk with Domenico Salvini to-day. He wants to lay out almond plantations, orchards, orange groves. That will mean much irrigation. He needs two thousand francs. I shall lend it to him—of course after he has signed a mortgage. It is only right to share our prosperity with others."

The evenings were long and peaceful. There was usually a quiet game of reversi with neighbors who came in; there were family dinner parties every Sunday; there was the old familiar work of making clothes for Elisa's coming baby; and there was always something to be done for the poor.

But what she loved most were long walks and drives with her brother—along the sea and up into the surrounding mountains. People might rave all they pleased over the beauties of France and Italy. Compared to Corsica they were nothing. Here nature had not been despoiled by man. Everything was as God had made it. If her children could only see it as she did!

"I suppose it is expecting too much of them. Youth is always seeking amusements, adventure. Perhaps I was that way too. Yes—I know I was. Already Lucien is growing restless here. Joseph's letters disturb him. He feels, now that Joseph has become a part of the government and is one of the Council of Five Hundred, he should be admitted there too."

"But Lucien is only twenty-three. No one can be elected to the Five Hundred until he is twenty-five."

"He says that makes no difference. Once in Paris age would not deter him. Joseph could help him surmount all difficulties. Shall I let him go?"

Her brother smiled. "Can you keep him from going?"

Letizia nodded reflectively. "I might. In spite of all his wilfulness he listens to me. He knows I am his champion. It hardly seems fair that Joseph should be there in Paris, taking part in politics, buying fine houses—one already, you know, in the Rue du Rocher and the beautiful country place at Mortfontaine—and Lucien eating his heart out here. I suppose he will never be satisfied until he has broader scope for his talents." She was silent a long time. "I advised Napolione to go to Paris and await his chance. I suppose I must do the same with Lucien—though it will be breaking one more home tie. One bears children, rears them, then sends them out into the world—and at last one is left alone."

They had reached a high part of the road from which a

broad view of the island and the sea unfolded. Letizia's eyes dwelt on the horizon. Far off to the north, beyond the shimmering stretch of blue, too far away to be seen, was the coast of France. And on that coast a little town, Toulon. It took no stretch of imagination to see what was going on there now. Four hundred ships all ready to set sail. The *Orient* dressed gaily and ready to lead the way. Napolione and Louis sailing off to unknown Egypt.

"Joseph writes that there are some—his enemies—who hope that Napolione will perish miserably in that distant country." She lifted her head. The deep glow of confidence and certainty was in her eyes. "Their wishes will bear no fruit. My son is reserved for a higher destiny than that."

Saveria rushed back breathless from the sea wall. A ship had just put into the harbor, a fast-sailing despatch-boat; it was called the *Vif;* it had come all the way from Egypt. "There is great news, Signora! Who do you think is on the boat!"

Letizia pressed her hands against her heart. "Napolione!"

Saveria shook her head. "The Signor Luigi. He has not landed yet. I got it all from the sailors who had swum ashore. They had a terrifying voyage. The English almost captured them. But the Signor Luigi is well. He ought to land in a few minutes."

Letizia threw a shawl over her head and hurried down the steep steps that led to the port. She recognized Louis from a distance—but, oh, so deeply tanned! He was as black as those Egyptians he had fought against; and so desperately weary. His one desire was to get into the cool shade of the house and sip glass after glass of aqua d'orza that Saveria fetched him. Poveretto—he should be allowed to rest, sleep, lie quietly protected from that blazing sun which had so exhausted him. But it was almost impossible

to sit still beside him, fan him, replenish the glass with barley water and not ask questions when there was so much of importance to be heard. And even when he began to talk, it was of things that were relatively unimportant—such as incidents of the voyage from Alexandria. Napolione had wanted to send him in an unseaworthy boat. He had rebelled and finally procured from the Admiral the *Vif*. There had been danger of capture by the British all along the way. In fact they had several times been chased by British cruisers. Once, almost overtaken, he had thought it better to throw overboard the Mameluke standards which Napolione had sent as trophies to the Directorate; otherwise they might have gone to London instead of Paris. But he had not destroyed the despatches. They were there in his bag. News in a way, but, to Letizia, irrelevant.

"Napolione?" she questioned.

Even that brought no definite reply. Louis seemed determined upon recounting only the things which were uppermost in his thoughts, his intimate association with the men of letters, astronomers, painters, poets—the extraordinary group which his brother had taken on the expedition. One of them had found a stone near Rosetta which was said to be worth the whole expense of the expedition. It was going to furnish a key to the deciphering of hieroglyphics. Of course this was just like him. Hadn't he spent hours writing to some man that had written a book when she had been worried to death over where their next meal was coming from! But this story was entirely too long. He was telling her about men of letters—in whom she had never been interested—when she was longing for news of great battles.

She clasped her hands impatiently. "Figlio mio—tell me about the battles. We have heard there was one at the foot of the Pyramids."

Oh, yes, there had been one in which eight thousand

Mamelukes had been routed. Napolione had made one of the prisoners his valet—a strapping fellow called Rustam. He said he was going to fetch him to France with him.

Still no recountal of thrilling campaigns, glories, epoch-making events. "Is Napolione well? Are there not fever and disease there?"

Indeed there was. Hadn't he been desperately ill himself? That was his reason for returning.

"Then Napolione has been ill?"

On the contrary he seemed to be going on exceedingly well; reading most of the time—a book by a German called *The Sorrows of Werther* and some poems by a certain Ossian.

This did not sound like Napolione at all. He was fond of reading, yes; he had always read—but not when he was conquering a whole new world. Could Louis be hiding something from her! "When will he return?"

Louis' shoulders rose indifferently. Who knew! When he left he had said he would be gone six months or six years.

"Dio mio! He has already been gone too long—almost a year."

"I don't think he can return yet. It would be dangerous. He could not risk the voyage without proper protection. The British destroyed the whole French fleet in Aboukir Bay."

Ah— at last she was getting to the heart of the matter! "You mean he is in danger?"

"He will be if steps are not soon taken to help him. He needs reinforcements, ships, supplies. The Directorate seems to have forgotten him. Evidently they are thinking of nothing but their war with Sicily and Naples. He has instructed me to urge his needs."

Letizia nodded. "I knew it was wrong for him to go so far away. Out of sight, out of mind. We must make them remember him."

"He feels that Joseph and Lucien have not followed his instructions; that they have failed him. He knows his wife has." Here Louis stopped sipping the aqua d'orza long enough to give his mother a significant glance. "Maman, Joseph has written him all about her. He at last knows what she is worth."

Letizia's face hardened. "And what does he say?"

"He is going to divorce her as soon as he returns."

"He is not really married to her. Their union was never sanctioned by the church. Why does he wait until he returns! The sooner such a mésalliance is dissolved the better. Joseph has also written to me all about her. She has forced him to buy a château for her just outside of Paris. Malmaison it is called—a significant name. She is living there quite brazenly with that young mascalzone Hippolyte Charles—you remember him at Montebello!—flaunting her shame and my son's dishonor before the whole of Paris. Decking herself in flowing white draperies, wearing a diadem of cameos on her head, calling herself a Greek goddess! Joseph can do nothing with her—nor Lucien. They say she has dragged our name in the mire—even though she uses her maiden name La Pagerie more than Buonaparte, grazie a dio!"

Her anger roused her into action. She left her chair and began walking about the room. Louis' words had suddenly made her feel idle and worthless. She had been spending too much time in placid contentment. Her happiness at being at home, her house once more built, the peaceful existence of Corsica, her friends who lived so far away from the turmoil of the world—all this had made her feel that she was not needed elsewhere. Everything seemed to be going so well. Joseph was becoming the grand seigneur that was his ambition; Lucien was at last achieving the height of his ambition and making endless, florid speeches before the

Five Hundred; Paulette and Leclerc were back in Paris and established in a fine house in the Rue St. Honoré; Elisa had presented her with a fourth grandchild; Jerome was training for the navy; Caroline was receiving an education far better than the others had had. And all of them were rich. No more poverty, no more disturbing thoughts of where to-morrow's dinner was to come from, no more cares! It was only natural that she should have let herself sink into a comfortable existence that seemed at last free from all alarms. But now—one of them needed her. Napolione was in danger! No matter what the others did, she at least would not fail him. The moment had come for her to throw off this peaceful cloak of domestic contentment. If her mission now called her away from the spot that was dearest in the world to her, she would leave it without a murmur.

"What are you going to do in Paris, Louis?"

Louis struggled to throw off his apathy. "First I shall present Napolione's despatches to the Directorate. Then I am going to insist that I be promoted to Major of Cavalry for my conduct at the storming of Alexandria."

Letizia's impatience could no longer be restrained. "I am not asking you what you will do for yourself. I want to know how you are going to help your brother."

He debated this. He thought Joseph was the one best fitted to present the matter of Napolione's needs to the Five Hundred. The crucial situation in Egypt should also be made known to the people. They ought to know that the fate of twenty thousand men and a valuable colony was trembling. Joseph and Lucien, with their political alliances, should surely be able to arouse interest in the desperate situation.

Letizia listened attentively, now back in her chair and knitting with a haste that was almost frenzy. For a long

time there was only the sound of the snapping needles. Then her anger had hold of her again. She threw aside her work.

"It is all the fault of that woman—that créole!"

"What could she possibly have to do with Napolione's need of soldiers, Maman?"

"Her friends are among the rulers of the Republic. She could easily make them listen to her. A faithful wife has her husband's interests continually at heart. Instead—she has brought ridicule upon him. No one respects a man whose wife makes him the laughing-stock of the world." Her gestures now became authoritatively definite. "The first step, Louis, is to get rid of her. Then Napolione's danger must be placed before the Directorate. They must be made to send him reinforcements, ammunition, ships—everything that he needs. They must not be allowed to forget him. They must be forced, even against their wishes, to remember what he has done for France—and that they still need him." She went to the door and called Saveria. "Bring my travelling-box from the ripostiglio."

Louis struggled up from his reclining position. "What are you going to do, Maman?"

"Go to Paris and save my son."

The journey seemed endless to Letizia. First the voyage to Genoa—always with the uncertainty of being captured by pirates roaming over the Mediterranean; then the long drive across the mountains and through the grateful green country of France. Even when the gates of Paris had been passed, the end seemed as far away as ever. The winding rows of houses, the dismal gray roofs after the red tiles of Corsica, the vast squares, hundreds of vehicles, noisy cafés, crowds of people! And the rain. How could one live under such leaden skies! There was hardly a ray of sunlight anywhere. This new world seemed to be made up of mist and

continual noise. So much movement was disturbing; it made her head whirl, her ears roar, her eyes utterly weary. The quiet of Corsica seemed all the more peaceful the farther away it became.

At last Joseph's house; and Joseph and Julie there to greet her. Such a grand house; row after row of lackeys in livery; gleaming waxed floors; heavily curtained windows that opened onto a terrace and garden. It was almost as gorgeous as that villa at Montebello.

"Is this your house, Joseph? Do you actually own it?"

Joseph smiled with a suavity that had increased a hundredfold since she had last seen him. "It has cost me over a hundred thousand francs, Maman; counting the necessary repairs. It was a barn when I took it. But this is nothing. Wait until you see my château at Mortfontaine."

"One hundred thousand francs!" Letizia's amazement increased. "Do all members of the Five Hundred receive such magnificent salaries!"

"I wonder what you will think of my house, Maman," laughed Lucien. "I have bought one, too; a beautiful hotel in the Grande Rue Verte."

"This is better than the army. Louis and Jerome must go in for political life also."

The clanking of chains and the sound of prancing horses made them all rush to the window. A brilliantly shining carriage, drawn by cream-colored ponies, had just stopped before the door; and descending from it was the most lovely vision Letizia had ever seen—a young woman of rare beauty and grace. Her rich dress was a perfect setting for such a jewel; a sumptuous pélisse of velvet lined with fur from under which showed heavy satin and the tiniest of slippers, the whole topped by a hat heavily burdened with nodding plumes. This must be one of those fashionable women she had heard so much about. No wonder, if

they were all like this one, they were more powerful than the rulers of the Republic! But there was something familiar about this radiant creature. Where had she seen her before! She pressed nearer the window. Then her lips parted in a cry of amazement. Paulette! Her own daughter! She turned back to the others gathered about her, smiling at her surprise. A rush of intense pride swept over her. Beside this amazing beauty of her own making, Julie and Catherine—the latter rechristened Christine by Lucien, with his passion for finding suitable names—the two daughters-in-law that she had grown to love so, were suddenly drab and colorless. But of course they were only Buonapartes by marriage.

"My daughter! You look like a princess!"

"Why not, Maman? Napolione said I should be one if I only had patience enough to wait."

She sat among them with beaming eyes and listened vaguely to their chatter. Each one appeared more striking than the other—each more beautiful; Joseph in his rich garments, the real grand seigneur that he had always imagined himself; Lucien, too, though hardly less repressed, restrained, than when he was a boy. Their perfunctory questions about Corsica, Uncle Fesch, Saveria were soon lost in a maze of names and places and events of which she knew nothing. Lucien, as always, talked more than any of the others. He fairly exploded with eloquence and repeated phrases which he had just been hurling at the Five Hundred. Though recently elected to be secretary of that august council, his one idea now seemed to be to cast epithets at the Directorate. His words were all confusing to Letizia.

"Is it permitted to criticise the government of which you are a member!"

"Not criticising them, Maman; only urging them on to more efficiency. Some one must tell them of their mistakes.

From a photograph by Alinari.

Pauline Bonaparte.

From the painting by Lefèvre.

See what they have done. Already, by negligence and petty jealousy, they have lost all of Italy that Napolione won for them. Between us, they are a bad lot—this Barras, Sieyès, Gohier, Moulin. I have written Napolione what I think of them. I have advised him to return at once. If there was ever a time France needed a strong man it is now."

Letizia was understanding better now. She turned to Joseph for confirmation of Lucien's words. But Joseph was sitting quietly in a chair, smiling more suavely than ever, almost indifferent. When questioned he raised his hand with a vague gesture. Political squabbles were endless. If one counted on political friends one was very likely to find oneself duped. His own experience with Bernadotte was an example. He had always thought of him as a loyal friend—surely Napolione's. He felt so sure of him that he had arranged that marriage between him and Désirée Clary. If anything should have allied him to the family, marriage certainly should have. But it had not. Only recently he had found out that Bernadotte was practically their enemy. No, he could not be bothered with politics any longer. There were much more important things awaiting one's valuable time. He was now writing a romance. It was to be called *Moina*. He had shown parts of the manuscript to Bernardin de St. Pierre, who said its descriptions of the horrors of war were stirring—quite equal to Jean Jacques.

"You ought to show it to Madame de Stael," Lucien suggested. "Her opinion is worth a thousand of St. Pierre's."

Paulette found their talk boring. She pushed between them to the place beside her mother. "You must come and see Dermide at once, Maman. He is an angel."

"Why did you not bring him with you? I never left one of you for an hour when you were babies."

"That is all changed now, Maman. One cannot waste one's time caring for babies. When they are older, yes.

But for the present I have an excellent nurse." She drew closer, more interested. "You must let me buy you some decent clothes, Maman. They will laugh at you in Paris in that cotton dress."

"It is quite good enough for me, Paulette. One woman of fashion in the family is enough. I see you are all spendthrifts. It will be my duty to save for you, so that when all this sudden wealth is gone you will have some one to come to."

Another carriage rolled up before the door. This time two young girls sprang out and rushed into the house. Letizia opened her arms to Caroline, who had come all the way from Madame Campan's pensionnat in St. Germain to greet her. After a long embrace she held this youngest daughter a little from her, the better to inspect her. What lovely white hands, what bright color, what glistening teeth. She was almost a second Paulette; almost, not quite. In spite of her freshness and gaiety, she was still wanting in that grace that gave Paulette such distinction. But who was this young girl with her, the one with the glorious golden hair and sweet, violet eyes!

Caroline pulled her friend forward. She made a graceful courtesy and smiled with gentle, shy eyes. "This is Hortense de Beauharnais, Maman—Napolione's step-daughter."

Letizia dropped the small hand as though the touch had burned her; and turning away to disguise her displeasure, her glance fell upon Louis. He was staring at the young girl with frank admiration.

It was an hour or more before she could get Joseph and Lucien and Louis and Paulette away from the others. She wanted them alone with her, freed from the disturbing restrictions of those not born in the clan. There were certain things that must be discussed at once, but only in the bosom of the family. Joseph's atelier finally offered them

refuge. With the door securely locked Letizia restrained her impatience no longer.

"What are the last tidings from Napolione?"

Joseph's face became grave. "The last letter received by the Directorate was not encouraging. It seems his advance into Syria has failed. He asserts that he abandoned the siege of Acre because it was necessary to return to Egypt. With the fleet destroyed at Aboukir, it is difficult to say what his situation is. At any rate it could hardly be worse than conditions here. I have written him that the spell of victory which he brought the Republic is rapidly vanishing without his presence."

"Louis tells me that without reinforcements he may perish. What are you doing for him?"

"What can we do, Maman! As for obtaining help from the Directorate, that is entirely too weak, too unpopular to be counted on. It may fall at any moment. I have written Napolione to throw over the whole Egyptian campaign and return here."

"Has he replied?"

Joseph went to a massive Boule desk, unlocked a drawer, and took out a folded newspaper. "This letter was published in England. They captured the courier on the way here. It was addressed to me." He settled comfortably in a chair and read: "I may be back in two months. I have been greatly troubled lately. The veil has been torn away from my domestic happiness. Arrange for me to have some place in the country when I return, either near Paris or in Burgundy. I am sick of human nature. I want solitude and isolation. I am tired of greatness, my feelings are dulled, glory has lost its flavor. I have exhausted everything at twenty-nine; there is nothing left me now but to shut myself up within myself. I shall keep my house in Paris but I shall never share it again with any one!"

Letizia's hands clasped in her lap. "I know that mood so well. He was that way at Toulon. If I were only with him it would soon pass. I know what to say to him." Suddenly her eyes were glowing with a new thought. "But that letter—his words—they mean only one thing. He will not return to that woman. Does she know this?"

"She knows everything before we do, Maman. Her intimate friends are among the Directors," Paulette explained. "They have encouraged her in the belief that Napolione will never return. She is counting on that. They say she has renewed her liaison with Barras. And her way of living! You should see her, Maman!"

"I hope and pray I shall never see her again!"

"She surrounds herself with every luxury. Jewels worthy of a queen! Pictures by great masters, statues, priceless objets d'art, the spoils of Italy which she brought back with her—things that are rightly ours! I shall never believe Napolione gave them all to her. And her dresses! She wore one at Talleyrand's ball the other night that cost three thousand francs. What I resent most of all is that she tricked Joseph into buying Malmaison for her."

"Nonsense, Paulette! Napolione left me in charge of his finances and told me to give her everything she needed."

"You should think first of what we need."

Letizia's glance travelled over Paulette's sumptuous velvets and furs. "It does not seem to me that you are in great need, my daughter."

"Beside her, Maman, I am a disgrace. I have no jewels worthy of the name. Left to her own ways, she will have everything that is rightly ours. She has all the arts of the courtesan—soft voice, clinging arms, languishing eyes. She could wheedle blood from a stone. She will have Napolione on his knees to her as soon as he is back. All the time he was here before going to Egypt he could think of nothing

but her. He would rarely see any one else. They called him the bourgeois husband."

"There are worse names than that."

"But it is not necessary to make a fool of yourself in order to be a perfect husband. Victoire does not spoil me."

"I am not so sure of that. Judging from your fine trappings one might even take you for what you call a courtesan." She turned to Joseph. "Louis said he had decided to divorce her. Can that be done during his absence?"

Joseph shook his head. "I am not so sure that that is still his intention. Louis' word and this letter are all I have. The letter may be a forgery got up by the English."

Letizia felt the object of her long voyage crumbling away before their words. Was her effort to be of no avail! Were they all to sit there with folded hands while this woman who had married her son threw his honor to the winds, while the Directorate he had glorified grew more and more indifferent to his distress! Was he to be left to perish on those burning sands of Egypt! Something must be done.

"But what, Maman!" Lucien exclaimed. "He knew what he was about when he went on this expedition. It is my opinion that he has achieved it."

"Achieved what?"

"Shown them here they can't get along without him."

"What good will that do if he never comes back!"

"He will come back. You know it, I know it, all of us know it." Paulette kissed her lightly on both cheeks. "So why should we eat our hearts out about him!"

"How can you talk so, when you owe him everything!"

"Of course I owe him everything. I admit it. Joseph and Lucien owe him everything too." She laughed tauntingly into the two frowning faces before her. "Where would all these fine houses and country estates have come from if it hadn't been for Napolione! Would either of you have been

important members of the Five Hundred if you were not brothers of the great General!" She rose, still laughing and waving her scented lace mits teasingly before them. "And it is my opinion that we shall all owe him much more when he comes back. In the meantime, there is nothing to be gained by worrying ourselves to death over his fate. Let the créole do that. I am going to carry you off to my house to-night, Signora Madre," she dropped easily into the Corsican dialect. "And after dinner, at which we shall have some of that poisonous French maccheroni, I am going to take you to the Comédie Française. There is an enchanting actor playing now named Lafon. He is so charming that he will make you forget all about Napolione and Corsica and the whole lot of your painfully trying children."

The days lengthened into weeks, even months; and yet Letizia stayed on in Paris. She felt that once there she could not leave until she had accomplished the mission which had made her undertake such a long journey. But her courage was lessening. There was a mysterious silence about the Egyptian campaign. No tidings of any sort were arriving from Napolione. His existence seemed to have been completely forgotten. Could it be possible that his star was fading, that he was to disappear just as he had burst in all his glory upon the world! She would not let herself dwell long on such painful uncertainties. He must come back. He would. She had not borne him for such an ignominious end.

Her interests centred about the children with her—and their children. Lucien's wife gave birth to another daughter, called by the father Christine Charlotte Alexandrine Egypta. Lucien would never outgrow his love of fine-sounding names. And he, like Joseph, had bought a country estate—le Plessis-Chamant; not so extensive as Joseph's,

but much too big an undertaking for so young a man. As for Joseph's château, it was worthy of a prince; fountains, plantations of rare trees, lakes, and a house in which no one had ever seen every room, she was sure.

"It was built by Duruey, Maman, to entertain the infamous Dubarry in. Poor fellow—it cost him his head, this and his friendship for Dubarry."

"Let us hope it will not cast such a jettatura upon you, Joseph."

She enjoyed spending days there in the country, especially with Julie and the new baby, Zénaide; not when the vast halls and parks were gay with the fashionable throng Joseph had gathered about him. His friends disturbed her; they were entirely too much of the great world, too easy in their manners, too elaborately dressed, and besides she did not speak their language. Sometimes she wished Carlo had made her really study French. But when she was there with the family she was fairly contented. The constant rumble of Paris worried her. It made her think of the tumbrils in Toulon and Marseille and the shrieks of people being dragged to the guillotine. Paris seemed to her to be continually in a state of revolution. She would never feel at home there. Beyond her children she had no companions except Panoria, Madame Permon, a childhood friend from Corsica. They were together a great deal. She was the one person with whom she could talk of Corsica and be sure of an interested listener. Their long conversations were like a breath from home. And another tie which drew them closer was that Panoria's young daughter, Laure, was going to marry the brave Junot when he returned from Egypt with Napolione.

Paulette took her often to the theatre. She loved that. And Lucien insisted that she attend the meetings of the Five Hundred and hear him speak. This experience was the

most thrilling of her sojourn in Paris; one day especially, a solemn and ceremonious occasion, when the anniversary of the foundation of the Republic was celebrated. The vast hall, the gathering of men, the chorus from the national conservatory of music, the gallery filled with elaborately dressed women—she had never seen anything like it before. And her amazement was increased a hundredfold when, at a moment during which the gathering was silent and awaiting the address of the president of the convention, she saw Lucien spring up on the platform, raise his arms, and cry out in ringing tones: "Long live the Constitution of the Year One! Let us all swear to die for it!" Immediately the entire hall was in an uproar of enthusiasm; every one was on his feet and with raised hands was taking the oath Lucien had called upon them to die for. Her Lucien—her young son who had always said he would one day sit in the seat of rulers. Va bene; he was there now; and the world was listening to him. His voice thrilled others as it did her. There was something irresistible in the tones. They touched chords that were inclined to lay dormant. One responded in spite of oneself. His words rushed over subjects that were vague to Letizia. Now he was talking about an attempt to lessen the liberty of the press. "Were people not to be allowed to express their opinions! Had not the Republic made them all free and equal!" His voice was full of flaming scorn. He shifted to a discussion of a tax on salt. Then came long phrases concerning financial measures. And always there were veiled, sometimes frank, criticisms of the Directorate. But it did not seem to matter what the subject was; his thrilling voice, his fire, his audacity, were received by the gathering with wild bursts of approval. He constantly called upon the assembly to renew its oath to the Constitution. Every one seemed either to be rising at his call or resuming seats at a calming wave of his hand.

It was all incredible to Letizia. Her pride made her glow with warm joy. That her son should be leading these rulers of France—of the world—seemed the height of a mother's ambition. If only Carlo had lived to see this! Yet, through her exaltation, there shot a subtle consternation. Did Lucien actually know what he was talking about! Was it not his voice, his presence, his fire that swept those older men along with him!

She waited patiently for him to come to the subject nearest her heart—Napolione in Egypt in need of reinforcements. He never mentioned it. He did not once demand that help be sent his brother. He did not ask the Government what they were going to do about that distant campaign. He made no effort to be put in communication with his brother.

She turned to Joseph for elucidation. Joseph tried to evade her questions. "Lucien has no time to think of any one but himself. He is convinced that no one's political genius equals his. His success has turned his head. He believes he can do in politics what Napolione has done with arms."

"If the enthusiasm of these people is a sign, it would seem that he has already succeeded. But—what is it leading toward?"

Joseph's shoulders rose lightly. "Who can tell! Lucien appears to be suffering from the illusion that he will be the head of the Government."

"It looks very much as if it were not an illusion," Letizia said. "But he should not let this make him forget his brother."

As the months passed, Paulette insisted that her mother go with her to Plombières to take a cure.

"Why? I am perfectly well."

"It will do you great good. Besides—it is the fashion to

spend several weeks there each year. The créole has just returned."

"Has she been ill?" Letizia's interest awakened.

"No such luck as that. She goes there in the belief that the waters preserve her beauty."

In the end Letizia consented to go. It was one way of getting through this interminable waiting for Napolione's return.

When they were back in Paris the long-awaited tidings arrived. Joseph brought the news straight from the Directorate. He had a copy of the letter which had been sent to the government from Fréjus, where Napolione had landed. "When I heard of your troubles I instantly set out for home. I had to take all risks, for my place was the spot where I could be of most use. Had there been no frigate, I should have wrapped myself in my cloak and sailed in the first cockle-shell I could find. With Kléber in command, Egypt is in good hands." The Directorate, the members of the Five Hundred, the Ancients, the whole political world was stunned by the news. No one seemed to have expected it. Least of all his wife.

"You have seen her?" Letizia asked.

"She sent for me to come to her house."

"At Malmaison?"

"No—the house in which Napolione left her when he went away; the house in the Rue Chantereine."

"Ah—she has returned there! Will she await him there?"

"No. She is preparing to hurry south to meet him. She was packing travelling-boxes when I saw her."

"Siren's arsenal," scoffed Paulette.

"She is leaving for Lyons to-night."

Letizia was silent a few moments. Then she rose and grasped Joseph by both hands. Her face was pale with determination.

"You must not let her reach him before you do. You and Lucien must leave at once—before she does. This is our chance to save him from her. Nothing else matters now. Paulette said that if she reaches him first, throws herself into his arms, he will believe nothing that we tell him. Perhaps she is right. It is safer to run no risks. Find him somewhere on the road. If she goes to Lyons, bring Napolione by another route. Now—go! Do not lose a moment. And do not fail to bring him straight to me. I shall be waiting for him at his house."

Letizia went every morning early to the little house in the Rue Chantereine to await the arrival of her son. Invariably she found Paulette had arrived before her. Together they sat anxiously, impatiently, awaiting Napolione's return. No news yet of the road he had taken from Fréjus, though Joseph had promised to send a special courier advising them of everything he had found out. Paris, however, told them much. The streets were alive with processions, flags were flying, banners with inscriptions telling of the return of the people's hero were stretched from house to house. Paulette read aloud from the rolls of newspapers she had brought with her. "The whole of France is delirious, Maman. Listen to this. 'Glory, peace, and happiness have returned to us! His bold adventures in foreign lands restore our courage! Out of darkness will now come light!' At the theatre last night there was a demonstration that lasted hours. His name was cried aloud by every one. Baudin, the deputy, fell dead with emotion. His name is on every one's lips."

Letizia's hands, clasped, pressed against her heart. It seemed her one gesture these days. "He has not been forgotten."

"Forgotten! The people are ready to give him anything he wishes."

Letizia's eyes grew troubled. "Yes—but who knows what he wants?"

Paulette laughed. "As if you didn't know, Maman—power, and still more power. He wants to rule the world."

"You all do. Napolione with arms, Lucien with words, Joseph with riches, you with beauty. Sometimes your ambitions frighten me. Where will it all end!"

The days of waiting dragged on and on. Julie and Catherine came and went. Only Letizia and Paulette kept the vigil. Jerome came in from his school at Juilly to await his brother. Caroline came also, bringing with her that young Hortense who was more at home in the house than any of the others. Was it not her mother's home! Nothing could be done about it. She and Caroline spent hours in the garden, laughing and chattering as if nothing ominous were hanging over the dwelling. Jerome, hardly fifteen, was as innocent of brooding events as the girls. Letizia watched them from the window. The young Beauharnais was dangerous. Her well-bred manners, her curtsies, her smiling blue eyes and radiant hair—all her charms were effective. Louis had looked at her with unconcealed admiration. Jerome was now doing the same; this young Jerome that had so suddenly changed into a handsome youth. There was something of Paulette in him; they were much more alike than any of the others. They had the same dazzling beauty, the same gaiety, the same irresponsibility that was so baffling. One could never be certain of what they might do.

A tremendous uproar in the streets scattered Letizia's thoughts. The cries of a multitude made her certain of what had happened. Paulette was already at the door. Letizia waited in the hall. Ah—there he was at last; her son of battle! But there was no smile on his lips for the crowd that was acclaiming him; there was none for Paulette as she clasped her hands about his neck; there was none for his

mother awaiting him with outstretched arms. Nor words either. He stalked ahead of them into the salon. Caroline and Hortense rushed in from the garden. He kissed them both alike.

"But Maman!" Hortense cried. "Where is she?"

The scowl was now like thunder. "I have not seen her."

"She went to meet you!"

"I have not seen her."

Letizia's glance sought Joseph. He nodded. The gesture was far from reassuring. She felt herself groping for words. Surely what Joseph had told him was not unexpected. Louis had said that already in Egypt the decision had been made in favor of divorce. Had something happened during all those months of silence to change him!

Letizia made a gesture to the others. It was not a time for idle words. She must be alone with her son. The others quietly left the room. She waited until he sank down in a chair before a table and leaned his head on his outstretched arms. Then she drew nearer, stood beside him, one hand on his shoulder, her eyes full of love, adoration. Yet still she did not speak.

Finally words came. "You are unhappy, figlio mio."

He nodded without speaking, without looking at her.

Again a long, unbroken silence. He stretched out his arms. The gesture was poignantly suggestive of emptiness. And there was a sound like a muffled groan.

"This house brings it all back to me. I was happier here —with her—than I shall ever be again."

"Do not say that. There are others worthy of you. She was not."

His voice was now contemptuous. "Who is worthy! Who has been faithful! Can you name one! Were my brothers! What did they do for me! I might have died in those desert sands so far as they—as any one—cared."

"That is not true. See how the people are welcoming you. They love you. You are their hero. You should not blame every one because the woman you chose for wife has been faithless."

Again the muffled groan. "Mio dolce amore!"

Letizia lifted her hand from his shoulder. Her features settled into rigid lines. She turned away to control herself. She despised weakness more than any other characteristic. It came like a blow to find it in this son on whom she had concentrated her thoughts through so many years. The world was crumbling about her. Her idol was falling into dust. And all for a woman who had dishonored his name!

At last he was speaking. "You do not understand, Maman. You never have. You hated her from the first—because she was of a different world, had different ideals, different manners. I know why you have no sympathy for her. That is only natural. But the others—Joseph, Lucien, Paulette. They hate her for other reasons. They know what a help she was to me. They know she made it possible for me to enter a world I had never known—her own by birth, by parents, by alliances—the ancient France of courts and kings. I needed just such help. I need it still—if I am to go where I want to."

Letizia's lips were trembling so that she could hardly speak; her face, flushed, harsh, blazing with contempt, spoke eloquently for her. "Then you are willing to sacrifice honor, respect, dignity to obtain your ends!"

He did not answer. She moved slowly, imperiously toward the door. Suddenly she stopped. A new sound had caught her attention. It made her heart stop beating. She turned. Her son's head had fallen forward on his arms. His body was shaking violently. He was sobbing like a child.

All severity fell from her. She went quickly and knelt

beside him. She put her arms about him. She drew his hand to her cheek, held it there, kissed it.

"Nabulio! Nabulio!"

The pressure of her hand was soothing. It always had been. She prayed that it might always be so. His sobs lessened; the trembling ceased. Still holding on to her hand, he straightened up with resolution.

"You are right, Maman. You are always right. I have done with her. She shall not enter this house again. Have her things packed and delivered to the concièrge. I shall never see her again."

Letizia spent the night in prayer. The sound of the strong soldier's sobs rang constantly in her ears. Mother of God—let him not suffer too much! Lighten his burden of sorrow, shame, humiliation! Let all memory of the faithless one pass from him! Guide his thoughts into still waters!

Paulette burst into the room. "Maman—she has returned!"

Letizia rose stiffly from the prie-dieu. It was a wrench to be so brutally thrust back into a world of ceaseless trouble. She looked at Paulette uncertaintly. "Who has returned?"

Paulette's lips curved disdainfully. "Need you ask! The créole."

Letizia's calm still lasted. "Where is she?"

"Where do you think she would be! At Napolione's house, of course."

Fear rushed back. "You have seen her?"

"No—but Lucien has. He was there with Napolione last night when she arrived."

"But surely Napolione did not receive her!"

"When he heard she was arriving he went to his room and locked himself in. He told Lucien to tell her he would never see her again."

"Ah! Then she went away."

Paulette laughed; but the sound did not curve her lovely lips with pleasure; instead they straightened out into a line that made her face almost ugly. "She—never! She burst into tears, said it was all our fault, that we were her enemies, that we had told him lies about her, that we were determined to separate her from her husband."

Letizia's head went up quickly. "She is right when she said we were all against her. We are. I have been since the very first time Joseph told me about her. As for separating her from her husband, I do not admit she is married to Napolione. No union without the blessing of the church is valid."

"You will have a hard time proving that, Maman—especially with her. She has seen the way the people have welcomed Napolione back. She realizes his power. She will never give him up."

"Napolione has said he would have nothing more to do with her. Can we not keep her from him! Where is Joseph? Where is Lucien?"

"They are both there in his house; but not with him. He will see no one. He has even refused to receive members of the government who have called. He will not leave his room."

"And she?"

"She is there too. She spent the night in the corridor before his door, knocking, pleading to be let in, weeping. She says she will not leave until he sees her. And if he sees her—" Here Paulette sank into a chair with outstretched hands.

"You have little faith in your brother's strength."

"I know the power women like her have. She is an artist in her profession. I know the irresistible appeal she can make."

"Appeal to what?"

"Lust."

Letizia frowned severely. She did not like such words coming from Paulette's lips. They were like the clothes she wore—not fitting for her daughter. "You cheapen Napolione with such words. Women have never been a part of his life."

"All the more reason that one woman—a woman like her—who has once awakened his passion will know how to hold him."

Letizia rose. "Silenzio! I will hear no more. Your words are like the clothes you wear—shameful. There is no truth in what you say. I was with Napolione until late last night. He told me himself he would never see her again. He gave orders for her things to be left with the concièrge. I shall go to him now."

"And be welcomed by her, Maman!"

"She would not dare!"

"Go and see. You will find her sobbing her heart out on the steps. Even you will not be able to move her. She will remain there until Napolione sees her."

Joseph came in with grave countenance and repeated what Paulette had just told. He would not listen to his mother's suggestion that she go to Napolione's house while his wife was still there. It was beneath her dignity. And besides, if Napolione was determined not to see her, as he had said, there would soon be an end to her pleading. She could not remain indefinitely outside a locked door. "It is better to wait—at least through the day. By evening she will have surely realized her case is hopeless and leave."

Paulette mocked his words. "Do you know women so little, Joseph! She will be there a week from now."

The day was spent in family councils. Julie and Catherine appeared now and then, but said little. Letizia felt they

were showing themselves weak and without character during this crisis. Good wives, gentle and obedient and childbearing, but without the courage that meets situations and overcomes them. They were no help to her now, no comfort. Their silence was almost offensive. One might have thought their sympathy was with the faithless wife.

Lucien appeared late that evening with restless, glowering eyes. There was no change in the situation. Napolione was still locked in his room. The créole was still pleading and weeping and tearing her hair outside the door.

His report reassured Letizia. She looked at them all with renewed pride. "I knew he had strength enough to resist her. You see, Paulette! I have faith in him."

Lucien showed no reflection of her confidence. "She has gathered reinforcements," he stated coldly.

"Surely not Barras—or Gohier!" Joseph exclaimed. "That would ruin her. Napolione would know at once—"

Lucien interrupted him contemptuously. "She is not so stupid as that. This is not a political affair. She will keep it in the heart of the family. She has called on her children to help her. Hortense and Eugene are there now."

"What can they do?"

"They are with her now—all three kneeling before the locked door and weeping together. I could hear them from the hall below. Hortense has her mother's wiles—and more sense. Her words were well chosen."

Letizia nodded. "I have observed her. She is clever. What does she say?"

Lucien twisted his lips with clever mimicry. " 'Do not abandon my mother! She will die if you do! And we, poor orphans, we whom the guillotine has robbed of our natural protector, are we to lose the one whom Providence has sent to make us happy! If you will not listen to our mother, at least hear our pleas! Let our desperate plight soften your generous heart!' "

Fear shot through Letizia. The appeal touched her. It would touch Napolione. The time had come for her to act. She must save her son before it was too late. She had not hesitated to go to his aid when his life was in danger. Why should she hesitate now to face a woman who was an even greater danger—yes, a thousand times greater—than any prison! She rose with determination.

"Joseph—Lucien! Take me to him."

Protesting hands met her decision. It was late; it was raining; Napolione had refused to open his door to them; he would do the same to her. In going there she would only subject herself to the opposition, perhaps even the insults, of a desperate woman. Napolione knew everything. Nothing had been kept from him. Joseph had given him a detailed account, written, of each affair that was a blow to his honor. He knew perfectly well that even his overwhelming popularity would not withstand the ridicule of the world once he had been branded with the contemptuous title of cuckold. The outcome rested with him. It was futile to attempt anything more.

So much opposition weakened Letizia's determination. If she had been in Corsica she would not have listened to them a moment. But here in Paris everything was different. Perhaps they were right. She went to her room and again spent the night before the prie-dieu. In the gray dawn her determination had returned. She would listen no longer to objections. If they would not take her to her son she would go alone. Better perhaps not to say anything to them. She dreaded more discussions and hesitations. Her children had their own ideas; she had hers. They were not the same. And even though Napolione had locked his door to them, he would not to her.

She slipped out of the house without encountering any of the corps of servants that usually bothered her so. It was

too early for them to be up and stirring. She hurried along the rain-soaked streets until she found an unoccupied calèche.

"Six, Rue Chantereine," she said to the driver.

The driver doffed his high hat, in which a tricolored pompon was bravely stuck. His wrinkled old face lit up with a glow. "That is the house of our hero, General Buonaparte. Is Madame going to congratulate him upon his safe return?"

"I have already done that," Letizia replied, the severity gone for a moment from her face. "He is my son."

The driver stared, bulged his eyes, gave a swirling twist to his florid mustaches, and bowed low. "Madame should be the proudest of mothers."

Letizia actually smiled. "I am."

The drive was interminable. The streets looked strangely deserted; the early morning hour made them gray and ghostlike. The sound of dripping water was incessant. The bridge across the river was mysterious and vague. At last the Rue Chantereine; and the house. Its doors and windows were barred. It looked like a tomb. Letizia breathed with great relief. Evidently the faithless woman had gathered her children about her and departed. Napolione had remained the conquerer—even of himself.

She raised the knocker and listened to the reverberation through the still house. It was a long time before she heard the sound of footsteps. The sleepy concièrge opened the door an inch, peered out, recognized the visitor, expressed immense surprise, and threw the portal wide open.

"I have come to see my son."

"Monsieur le Générale is not yet awake, Madame."

"Do not disturb him. I shall wait until he is up. When you take him his coffee tell him I am here."

She went into the salon where she and Paulette had waited through those long days. The concièrge threw open

a window and let in the gray light. The heavily scented air of the room struck Letizia with an ominous note. How the trail of such creatures lingered for days after they had vanished! She might almost have still been there, so persistent was the perfume. She chose a chair and sat down. How comforting it was to be once more in the same house with her son! What a joy to protect him! She would go to Notre Dame that very morning and light a candle—not one—many—at least thirty—one for every year of his life.

An hour dragged by; two; then three. The clock ticked out ten tinkling strokes. She stirred uneasily. She rose and called the concièrge. Had not the General yet rung for his coffee! Perhaps something had happened to him. Perhaps—During moments of great depression he had always spoken of death. "Tell him I am here and must see him," she commanded.

She waited anxiously now. She even listened at the door. She heard a knock in the hall above; then muffled voices. Her heart stood still. Surely that was the sound of a woman's voice! The door closed with a sharp report. A strange dark creature in fantastic garb was now standing in the door bowing obsequiously before her. At first she was startled, then remembered who it was. He had accompanied Napolione back from Egypt. His name was Rustam.

"Monsieur le Générale will come at once."

Ah, then he was all right! He had done nothing desperate. There was nothing to be worried about. What tricks the imagination could play on one at such moments!

At last heavy footsteps on the stairs—the tread of the conqueror. There he was coming toward her in dressing-gown and slippers, as fantastic in design and fabric as the black servant's. She hurried toward him. He took her in his arms, kissed her on both cheeks, then held her a little way from him. For a second his glance met hers, then fell. Somehow she felt he was afraid to meet her eyes. But why! Did

he not know that all her sympathy and love was for him in the struggle he had just been through—and overcome! She would reassure him at once.

"Napolione—I am so happy!"

He dropped her hands, turned away from her, his head still lowered, his eyes evasive.

"Wait, Maman. You do not know. I—I have forgiven her."

"Forgiven whom?"

"My wife."

She would not believe him. She would not accept such words. But she said nothing. Her scorn, blazing forth from her eyes, spoke sufficiently. It burned through the silence. At last, finding it unbearable, he faced her and lifted his head.

"I am like one of the warriors that besieged Troy—no better, no worse. And my wife is like their wives. Menelaus forgave Helen."

Still no response.

"Maman—have you never loved! Is it impossible for you to understand!"

In desperation he reached for her hands. They were cold and lifeless, like her face. He dropped them quickly.

"I can say no more. I love her."

At last she spoke. "You say that—in spite of——"

"In spite of everything, Maman."

She turned from him slowly. There was a lifetime of relinquishment in the movement. It was a moment in which she renounced forever the dreams of her youth. Her face was suddenly old and careworn, wrinkled, drawn. Her shoulders sagged. She was an old woman.

At the door she hesitated; but she did not look back. The words reached him over her shoulder.

"Cosi sia, figlio mio. Addio."

II

During the days that followed Napolione's reconciliation with his wife, Letizia's despondency centred in thoughts of her brother and Corsica. Now, more than ever, she saw that as her place in the world. She had forsaken it to make this long journey to save her son from what she felt was ruin; and she had failed, utterly failed. He had refuted her counsel, her love, her scorn. She had been told, not in words but in actions that spoke so much more definitely, that her influence was no longer a power. She had been pushed aside by a woman that held sway, not by means of the mind, high standards, ennobling ideals, but by the senses. She tried to conquer the bitterness that entered her heart. She prayed for strength and calm acceptance. She had never yet rebelled against burdens thrust upon her. She would not now. Some way would surely yet be shown her by which she could go on bravely.

Days spent in prayer and meditation brought renewed resolution. She gathered her children about her—all except Napolione—and told them of her decision. "I have written to my brother to come and fetch me back to Corsica."

Protests met the statement. Joseph maintained that her place was with them in Paris. Lucien complained bitterly that she was no longer interested in them. Paulette scoffed at the idea of returning to Ajaccio. Why bury herself there when the whole of Paris was before her!

"Corsica is my home. Paris is a strange land."

Their pleas had no effect upon her. Her determination was fixed and immovable. "But before I go I want to tell you of the one course we must now all follow; I mean with regard to Napolione. He has made his choice. He has lis-

tened to nothing we have told him. He has forgiven his wife and taken her back into his home. There is only one thing left for us to do—accept her."

Joseph and Lucien were silent; only Paulette burst into violent denunciation of the suggestion. She would die before she would be friends with the créole.

"You will do what I tell you," Letizia answered warmly. "It is your duty to your brother—and to yourself. None of you can afford to antagonize him. You know that as well as I. You all need his help."

"He needs ours as well," Lucien blurted out. "I have just been elected president of the Council of the Five Hundred. He cannot overthrow the Directorate without me. He knows that."

Joseph raised a cautious hand and hurried to see that the doors were securely closed.

Lucien rushed on with blazing eyes. "We planned it all on the way to Paris. I told him Sieyés and Ducos counted on him. We are to form a provisional consulate that will replace the tottering Directorate. Sieyés, Ducos, and Napolione are to be the three consuls. Once in power we will rewrite the constitution."

"If we do not first lose our heads as the Robespierres did," Joseph added in a lowered voice.

"It will not be that way because what we do will be done strictly within the law. It will be a constitutional step. You, Joseph, will see that the Ancients vote for a new régime and the downfall of the Directorate which has ruined France. I will answer for the approval of the Five Hundred. Napolione, with the army back of him, will tie the knot. We cannot fail."

Letizia listened with increasing alarm. What were they up to now! Overthrowing the government of France! Dio mio—always this driving, flaming ambition! Surely this

time they were rushing into ruin. Why couldn't they be satisfied with fine houses, unimagined riches, positions of distinction. What was that Joseph had said about losing their heads as the Robespierres had! Had they all gone mad!

"It is for the glory of France, Maman."

They tried to allay her fears. Even Joseph, quiet and suave, seemed bent upon this dangerous project. And it was he who first agreed with her in regard to accepting Napolione's wife. The moment was too crucial to let personal emotions interfere. The clan must stand together now more closely than ever. Each one needed the other. He ended with the suggestion that the family dine with him the next Sunday at Mortfontaine; and that included in the circle should be Napolione and his wife. "Will you come, Maman?"

Letizia was thoughtful through a short silence. She knew they were watching her. A great deal depended upon her decision. Perhaps her son's future happiness was trembling in the balance. Ebbene—no one should say she had stood in the way. She had always given him of her best. It was too late now to draw away from him, even though standing with him meant relinquishing standards of a lifetime.

She nodded with decision. "Yes—I will come."

Paulette gave a cry of horror. Nothing would ever persuade her to meet the shameful courtesan again.

"You will be the first to come, figlia mia," Letizia commented quietly, "because, though you sometimes give the impression of being testa all'aria, you know, deep down in your heart, you love Napolione and will do nothing to hurt him."

It was hardly a gay gathering that awaited the returned hero and his wife the following Sunday in the spacious hall of Mortfontaine. The air was oppressive; the silence ominous. The sound of wheels on the driveway increased the

tension. Letizia knew that they would all take their attitudes from her. The success of the meeting depended upon her. She moved forward slowly, calm, entirely self-possessed. It was asking too much of her to show graciousness. Dignified restraint was her limit of achievement. Napolione's grateful smile sustained her. She embraced him; then she offered her cheeks to the woman beside him. The dreaded moment passed.

A huge travelling box was lifted from the carriage and carried into the hall. Napolione placed a chair near it and insisted that his mother sit there while he opened the case himself. He took out package after package—spoils brought back from Egypt. Every one crowded about eagerly. Restraint disappeared in curiosity. A cashmere shawl for Maman. One for Julie. Another for Catherine. A mother-of-pearl encrusted casket used by women of the harem for their jewels. This was for Paulette. Ancient manuscripts of papyrus for Lucien—recorded eloquence of Egyptian orators. A stone covered with hieroglyphics for Joseph. A scimitar covered with precious stones that had belonged to Mourad Bey; this for Jerome. Numerous objets d'art, rare jewels, rich stuffs, strangely wrought ornaments of silver and gold and opaque stones. There was something for every one—even those who were not there; an ancient cross for Uncle Fesch, the work of a tribe of Christians who had lived forgotten through centuries in the depths of Egypt yet retaining always their faith; a brilliant leather purse for Saveria to guard her daily soldi in. But these were not all. The case seemed without bottom. There was still a large package wrapped carefully in folds of silk. It must be handled with extreme care. A long time was spent in unwrapping it and placing it on the table: an elaborate presepio of ebony and mahogany with all the personages of the Nativity in finely chiselled ivory.

"For you, Maman. It made me think of you when I first saw it. It was made in Bethlehem. See—there you are!—the Madonna Santissima watching over her Child. The only difference is that you were not satisfied with one. You must have eight—eight heavy burdens to repent of bearing all your life."

She pressed his hand affectionately. What a boy he still was! Then she turned to the smiling woman beside him. How soft her voice was! How gentle and appealing her eyes! What a graceful presence! She felt her coldness lessening. After all, it was a day to forgive and forget.

"And what has he brought you, my daughter?"

The lovely smile deepened. The dark eyes glowed as though from a light within. The soft voice fairly sung with charm.

"Himself."

Corsica faded into the background. Napolione had asked her to remain in Paris. He said he needed her there.

"You! You do not need me any longer, my son. You have your wife."

"She is different from you, Maman. I need you in another way. Remember, it is because of you that I am here. That day at Nice I was ready to go back to Corsica. You would not let me. You said it was too small for me. Wherever I go now—you are to blame."

The words were sweet to hear. They proved that he had not put her completely out of his life. The only barrier was that other woman. "Of what use can I be here now?"

His brows drew together; his hand sought the opening in his tunic. "The whole career you planned for me rests on the next few days."

No—no! The career she had thought of for him was very far from the dangers he was now inviting. Indeed, she

would be happier if he would rest content with the glory he had already achieved.

"But I have reached the point now where there is no turning back. I must go on and on—up and up. The people want me. France needs me. I will not fail her. And—I want you to face the crisis with me."

She liked his urging her to remain; yet she tried to give reasons that called her back to Corsica. "There is so much to look after there. The house, the vineyards, investments. You sent me much more than I needed. I have not spent half. My brother and I have bought several houses and much land. Sometimes I think your uncle was destined for affairs rather than the church. He showed himself a hard worker in Marseille; since then, in Corsica, he has acquired a small fortune. They say his collection of sacred paintings, gathered from desecrated churches, is valuable. He is on the way to becoming rich. And he does not spend recklessly," she added meaningly.

Napolione smiled. "You and he, Maman, are the only members of the family who possess that trait."

"Dare you chide me for economy!"

"I praise you for it. What would have become of us if it had not been for your constant savings!"

"What may become of you yet if some one does not save for you! You are all spendthrifts. All this extravagance is appalling. It is sinful."

"You are always right, Maman," he humored her. "But while we are rich do not deny yourself. Write to Uncle Fesch to come here. No one can become rich in Corsica. Paris—France is the place. But just now there are more important things to be thought of. Murat wants to marry Caroline. With your approval I shall hurry forward the marriage. Then there is Jerome. I want him to enter the navy. There is a great future in that—when we conquer

England. And I have plans for Paulette's husband. I need your help in all these decisions."

His ever constant thought of the others softened her. It brought them once more close together. Their interests seemed again the same. She even relented so far as to go to Malmaison and be welcomed by his wife. But these visits were not entirely successful. There were too many fashionable trappings there. She felt awkward in the gatherings of so many people of the great world. And there were those two stepchildren who disturbed her without tangible reasons: the pretty, graceful Hortense, with all her mother's subtle appeal; the young, handsome dandy, Eugene.

She much preferred the homely atmosphere of Panoria Permon's house. There she could talk of things she knew about; and in her own language. There she could warm herself with reminiscences—sometimes gay, often sad. She made Panoria recount many times the incidents of Carlo's last days in Montpellier. She loved to tell young Laure about her journey through the night with Junot to find Napolione at the siege of Toulon.

In Joseph's house there were councils and conferences all day and all night. The eighteenth of Brumaire had been decided upon for what they called the coup d'état. She could see that they were far from certain of the outcome. They went about always with pistols in their pockets. She felt a reflection of their nervousness, though they tried to make their words when speaking before her sound reassuring. Lucien's confidence never wavered. Joseph showed moods of depression, especially when he discovered that Désirée's husband, Bernadotte, was not disposed to risk safety to help them. "He says we are facing failure; and that by remaining neutral he will be in a position to protect us later when the storm bursts over us."

"Why should there be danger! The whole of France wor-

ships Napolione. They want him at the head of the government."

"He is not the only one who wants to be at the head of the government."

"But none of them are half so worthy of the place as he!"

The eventful day arrived. Louis, not taking part in what he termed his brothers' plot, acted as bearer of tidings. The women had been advised to remain in the house. Julie and Catherine sat beside Letizia, knitting. Paulette arrived during the morning, bubbling over with gay chatter. Taking her favorite place on a chaise longue that faced a mirror —a pose she had copied from Madame Récamier, Lucien said—she recounted to her reflection everything she had heard. The first step of the coup d'état had been carried through without a single exciting incident. Such calm was intensely boring. She had thought the streets of Paris would resemble the days of the Terror. On the contrary, they were as tranquil as a summer Sunday. The Council of Ancients had merely met and adjourned the meeting to the next day at St. Cloud. The Five Hundred were to meet there also. The excuse for leaving Paris was that some sort of an uprising would likely take place. "As if any one would dare protest with Napolione in command of the Army of Paris!"

Louis returned late in the evening with the news that General Moreau had seized the Luxembourg Palace, home of the Directors. Talleyrand had forced Barras to write his own resignation. Two other Directors, Gohier and Moulin, had been confined to their houses. The way was now entirely cleared for Napolione and the remaining Directors, Ducos and Sieyés. "Paris is as quiet as a tomb. Fouché, chief of police, has seen to that. In fact, no one seems to know what is going on. It was only from Lucien that I finally heard the news."

Letizia's anxiety lessened. "Meno male. Then it is all finished. They are safe."

"Not yet, Maman. To-morrow will show that. To-day was only preparation."

She left them and went to her room. There was comfort awaiting her there at the prie-dieu.

The next day was a repetition of anxiety; now increased, for with the scene of crucial events transferred to St. Cloud there was no way of hearing news until it was brought by courier. And none came. The hours seemed interminable. Paulette sent hurried scrawls to General Moreau asking for tidings. The messenger returned with the statement that the General had left his quarters and would not return before night. There seemed to be nothing to do but wait.

"I should have gone to St. Cloud with them," Letizia exclaimed, restless, agitated under so much uncertainty.

"What good would that have done, Maman?"

"At least I should have been with them during these dangerous hours. I always accompanied your father when his life was at stake."

Evening came on and still no news. Panoria Permon called with her daughter. They brought all sorts of rumors but nothing certain. They remained to dinner. "Surely your daughter-in-law would know something. Why do you not go to her house?"

Letizia shook her head. "That house will never relieve my anxiety."

Paulette sprang up from the chaise longue. "At least let us go out. I shall die of ennui here. Why not the theatre! They are giving 'L'Auteur dans son ménage' at the Feydeau with Martin, Saint Aubin, Chenard. That will help us pass several hours. It will divert you, Maman. When we return there will surely be some tidings."

Letizia consented with alacrity. She felt, as Paulette, a prisoner in the house. It was not what she was accustomed to—to sit and hold her hands while those of her family

were struggling through what might be fatal moments, perhaps giving their lives to achieve what they had set their hearts on. But the theatre did not distract her. She could not keep her eyes on the stage. The play seemed so puerile. so artificial. A great drama was being played a few miles away, her sons were taking leading parts in it, and she was doing nothing. Her glance turned constantly to the door of the loge. She had left word that any news that might arrive be brought to her at the theatre. But the door remained tightly closed. An hour passed; one act was finished; another begun. Suddenly the actors stopped in their lines. One of them came forward and held out his hands—a gesture demanding silence. Evidently he had something important to say that was not in the piece.

"Citizens! General Buonaparte has just escaped being assassinated at St. Cloud by traitors of our country!"

Paulette gave a shriek and sprang up. Letizia grasped her hand. "Silenzio! He did not say he had been assassinated. He said he had escaped." She rose, pale, quiet, steady, and turned to Panoria. "We shall go to her house now—as you suggested. She will know if there is any truth in these words."

The streets were silent and empty—ominously so. Only when they had crossed the river did they encounter some evidences of excitement. A far-off murmur, like the sound of rushing water, floated across the still night. When they turned into the Rue Chantereine, the sound increased steadily; it became a deafening roar. Suddenly their way was blocked. The street was crowded with a yelling mob. Many people were on horseback, some in carriages, hundreds on foot.

Paulette leaned far out of the carriage. "What is it! What has happened!"

No sensible answer could be got from any one. Their re-

plies were only cries of "General Buonaparte! Our leader! Our Hero!"

The crowd seemed wild with excitement. The carriage crawled along. When it finally reached the house it was surrounded by mounted soldiers. No one was being admitted. General Buonaparte was not there. He had not returned from St. Cloud.

Letizia pushed by the men on guard. "His wife is here. I am his mother."

At the door of the brilliantly lighted salon she stopped. The room was crowded with men. She recognized two of them—Talleyrand and Fouché. She had met them at Mortfontaine. There was only one woman, a lovely woman, brilliant in the glow of so many candles, beautifully dressed, graceful and smiling and—supremely happy. Letizia advanced slowly. Some one spoke her name. The lovely woman swept forward in an aura of perfume and smiles.

Letizia drew herself up, rigid, severe. It was no time for meaningless kisses.

"My sons! Are they safe!"

"Eugene has just returned from St. Cloud. He brought us the wonderful tidings. Napoléon has been elected First Consul."

Letizia would not accept such second-hand news. She wanted statements from her sons. She would wait until they returned themselves. The charming hostess was most gracious. Would she have some refreshment! A glass of orange syrup—coffee—a cup of cocoa—a glass of hot spiced wine! Hortense would fetch her anything she might wish. Nothing? But surely she must be exhausted with such a long day of anxiety. A quiet place to wait? Of course—the little salle which gave on the garden would be perfect. No one would be allowed to disturb her there. But there was no telling when the heroes of St. Cloud would return.

Midnight passed. The crowd increased. The murmur from the street settled into a steady roar. Now and then a voice rose into a disturbing cry; died down; was lost in the rushing sound. The steady ripple of conversation—suave, musical, light—flowed into the little room where Letizia sat. Laughter punctuated the flowing sound. How could they laugh at such a moment! But they were French. They always laughed. They had laughed even during the Terror.

Joseph was the first to come to her. He slumped down in a chair showing complete exhaustion. He could hardly speak. Yes—they had won; but—it was not as they had planned. It was not entirely according to the constitution. He was inclined to be evasive.

Lucien burst into the room, disheveled, trembling, his eyes bloodshot and contemptuous. He slammed the door behind him and faced his mother.

"Lucien—my son! What is it! Joseph tells me you have won."

Won! Yes. But against all rules. Napolione had shown himself a fool! He had failed them. He had acted like a stupid school boy. Lucien tugged at his lower lip and strode about the room.

"If it had not been for me we should all now be mounting the scaffold—decried as traitors—killed for the good of France! I had complete confidence in him—at least when the outcome was to be for his glory alone. It was all planned out in detail. He was to appear before the Ancients and appeal to them to save the country from the ruin of the Directorate; he was to convince them that they must give him their votes—elect him consul. I did not dream he could not address a gathering. He speaks well enough to soldiers. But before the Council he hemmed and hawed, stuttered, forgot what he had come to tell them—all because they interrupted him and asked questions. He showed himself

worthless when his authority was questioned. His power is only effective before complete obedience. Oppose him and he is lost. He failed so miserably that the Ancients would not give him their vote. And all the time I was waiting for him to appear before the Five Hundred with the approval of their superiors. I talked for hours. We took the oath of the Constitution again and again. I called the roll as slowly as possible. I held them there for hours and hours. And when he at last came, how do you suppose he appeared!—surrounded by four grenadiers and a group of officers as if he were determined to violate the hall by force."

He threw himself into a chair, mopped his face, rose again. It was impossible to remain still. "His appearance was the signal for all his enemies to rise against him. Only their cries could be heard. 'Down with the tyrant! Down with the dictator! He is nothing but an outlaw! He wants to rule us with a harsher hand than Robespierre!' One man tried to stab him. I did not expect to see him leave the hall alive. But his officers formed a circle and got him away. It was then that I saw only desperate measures would save us. I sprang on to the platform and yelled the assembly into silence. When they were ready to listen, I tore off my robe and scarf. 'Citizens,' I cried. 'There is no longer liberty here!' They did not want to let me escape. They pursued me to the door with hostile cries. I was no better than my brother. We were all outlaws. There was only one hope left —the troops. Napolione was outside surrounded by them. They were still faithful to him. I whispered the order to him. He gave it. The next moment the soldiers were charging into the hall with fixed bayonets and drums beating." He burst into loud laughter. "You should have seen them, Maman! The whole Five Hundred throwing themselves out of doors, jumping through windows, running away and hiding in the dark! And I, urging the soldiers on, crying to

them: 'Clear out the whole den of assassins! They tried to stab your General! They are all traitors! Let us rid ourselves of them forever! They have ruined France!' "

Letizia listened with pallid countenance. She was no longer able to control her trembling hands. "Then everything has failed!"

Lucien's excitement died down. He was at last calm. "Failed! No. I lost no time in finding those of the Five Hundred who were our friends—hiding behind trees in the Orangerie or under wine barrels. I marched as many of them as I needed back into the hall. I took my place among them again as President. I made them rule out sixty-one members. I made those who were left appoint three directors to rule France as provisional consuls and elect two committees to draw up a new constitution."

"And Napolione!"

"In name is one of the three. In reality—is all three."

"Then he owes it all to you, Lucien!"

His reply was lost in a burst of yells from the street. It seemed now that the walls of the house shook with the roar of hundreds of voices. The rippling conversation and light laughter in the salon faded away as though it had never existed. Nothing could now rise above that tempest of enthusiasm. It was a great irresistible force rushing across the world.

Letizia still sat in the little room. Joseph and Lucien had rushed out to meet the returning hero. She was alone; and yet it seemed to her that she was standing unprotected before the eyes of the whole world. What she had just heard had left her stunned with fear, horror, uncertainty. Outlaws! Lucien said they had been called that. In Corsica the word would have been bandits. Her blood ran cold. In her own country they could have borne such a stigma with complacency. They could have taken themselves off to the fast-

Lucien Bonaparte, Prince of Canino.

From the painting by Lefèvre.

nesses of mountain peaks and lived safely. Here there was no escape. They were all now going in the direction she had so often dreaded. They were overstepping themselves. They were drunk with ambition.

The sounds without died down. Again laughter floated in to her—that soft, lilting laughter she had first heard at Montebello. Napolione was coming into the little room, his arm about the smiling, triumphant woman. The end of a sentence was still on his lips: "—and to-morrow night we shall sleep in the Luxembourg Palace."

He came straight toward Letizia, grave, portentous, proud. He made a formal bow before her, raised her hand to his lips, kissed it—then smiled with the beauty that she always found irresistible.

"Ebbene, Signora Madre. At last I am the ruler of France. Are you satisfied! Is that glory enough for you!"

She did not answer his smile. Instead she looked deeply into his eyes. She seemed to be seeking something there, some hidden explanation of what it all meant, what it was all leading toward, something that would still the fear within her.

"Provided it lasts, my son."

BOOK IV

I

SAVERIA had never seen so many people. It was like the whole world gathered into one street and confined there. And so many soldiers! Madonna santissima—were they all going into battle at once! The rumbling of drums was like thunder; the flashing flags, lightning; the incessant murmur of voices, water rushing down from mountains to the sea. "Signora mia, I do not like so many people. Surely there are not half so many in the whole of Corsica. I am frightened. They will surely kill us. Would it not be better to return to the house, lock the doors, bar the shutters! They could not get at us there."

Letizia leaned forward in the carriage and laid a soothing hand on Saveria's trembling one. "There is nothing to fear, cara mia. It is all in honor of my son."

"But we shall never be able to find the Signor Nabulio in this crowd!"

"He is in his palace—the Tuileries. We shall soon be there. But if you call him il Signor Nabulio no one will know of whom you are talking. He is now the First Consul —the ruler of the whole of France."

The title had little significance for Saveria. She felt it would not matter who one's son was if one got lost in this jostling, yelling, wild mob. Her eyes sought Signor Fesch's, seated beside his sister. A man ought to know when there was danger. He did not appear disturbed at all. His calm smile was more reassuring than the Signora's words. Still —those surging masses! Would they ever escape them!

At last Signor Nabulio's palace was before them. But instead of offering protection, it appeared to increase the

danger. It could hardly be seen for the crowd of people. And there were even more soldiers about it; all of them with drawn swords and waving plumes. The coachman leaned forward and spoke to an officer. The officer saluted. A word of command rang out. A way was cleared. The carriage rattled up to the door.

Saveria closed her eyes and followed her mistress blindly. Those drawn swords had a way of shining that made her blood run cold. Was it not here they had told her so many people had been butchered! If she had only not left Corsica. But her mistress had sent for her and she had to come.

At last they got through the door and went up the marble staircase. More shining swords and waving plumes. One could touch them now. Yet people were laughing and talking as though they were at a festa. And the Signora was taking it as calmly as though it were only a recevimento at the Governor's palace in Ajaccio. See how steadily she walked, with one hand resting on the Signor Fesch's arm. And how handsome she looked in her black satin gown covered by the rich shawl the Signor Nabulio had brought her from one of those unknown countries he had conquered. No, not the Signor Nabulio—the Signor Primo Console! She must try to remember that. Benissimo. No matter who he was, he was certain to be proud of his mother that day.

Letizia was not nearly so calm as Saveria thought her. She could not overcome her dread of these great gatherings. She would not have come that day if Napolione had not urged her. He said it was going to be a review of the Grand Army, his army, his followers, his friends, all those who had made him great, and that the occasion demanded her presence. If she were not proud of him, she should at least be proud of the glory of France. She was proud of both; he knew that. Then she must show it by coming to the review. She had refused to live with him in the Tuileries; she

preferred to live quietly in the house her brother had bought since his arrival in Paris; she was not showing any interest at all in what her son was accomplishing; any one would think she was ashamed of him. Her eyes belied such accusation. And to show approval she must face those disturbing gatherings.

She stopped at the door leading into the vast reception room hung with yellow damask. The whole of the great world appeared gathered there; diplomats, officers of state, generals, strangers from foreign lands, their wives, daughters—a surging, chattering, laughing throng dressed in gorgeous uniforms, glittering decorations, waving plumes, trailing mantles. It was much like the gathering that had awaited Napolione the night he returned from St. Cloud, only a thousand times more noisy and gorgeous; and as before, the woman with the velvety voice came forward to welcome her. Her greeting was the signal for others to rush forward to bow before her and kiss her hand. How she hated all this bowing and scraping that meant nothing; all these faces that were so utterly unknown to her; and she unknown to them! Only now and then a familiar countenance appeared out of the mass. Two she remembered distinctly. They seemed to be at every gathering. How she distrusted them both! One so coldly clever and assured and with a deathlike pallor that had lasted from the days when he was a priest—the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Prince Talleyrand Perigord. The other, the Minister of Police, the one in whose hands her son's life was entrusted—a man of dark countenance and cringing manner. What was it Lucien had said of him! "He lacks nothing in cleverness, little in good judgment, everything in virtue." If there had only been one Corsican in the whole gathering she would have felt more at home. But there was none. They had been left behind and forgotten—by every one except her.

Ah, at last there were her children! Caroline, a blushing bride, now Madame Murat, standing beside Junot's young wife, the sprightly Laure Permon. She must kiss her and look into her eyes. Yes, she was happy. One could see that in her glowing countenance. "Tutto va bene, figlietta mia?" "Almost too well, Maman. Joachim is adorable—a perfect husband. And so unselfish. He takes me to every ball and holds my gloves and fan while I dance the whole evening through. Poor fellow, he has never learned to dance!" And there was Paulette again robed in what could only be described as fantastic garb. What was she trying to represent to-day—some Oriental queen, a Greek slave, a Roman matron! A tunic of vivid green swept the floor; yards upon yards of gathered maline fell over her draperies; gorgeous beads hung from her ears and were wrapped about her neck; a turban of gold brocade and feathers decked her head; and a voluminous shawl swathed the entire costume. But through it all her beauty shone forth dazzlingly.

"In black, Maman—always in black!" she cried with quick inspection of her mother's dress. Then, seeing Saveria trying to hide behind her mistress, she burst into gay laughter. "And this is your lady-in-waiting! Napolione will be proud of his Corsican family to-day!"

Letizia turned to Julie and Catherine. They were much more soothing than her own startling Paulette; though she had to admit they did look somewhat frumpy beside such beauty. Across the room she saw Louis giving all his attention to the blond charm of the Beauharnais girl. There was Lucien, too, telling Elisa, just arrived from Marseille and enveloped in black velvet with which she vainly attempted to hide her expectations, of the new book he was writing which was to be called *La Tribu Indienne*. Joseph was talking gravely with senators. Jerome was beside his sister-in-law, always quite willingly at her beck and call.

The long thundering roll of drums at last gave the signal. There was a rush to gain the windows. Below, in the Carrousel, troops stretched out as far as the eye could see. Officers were giving a last glance at their regiments. Everything must be in perfect order, every man at attention, every gun in place, every cap at the proper angle—otherwise the much-sought word of praise from the general would not be forthcoming. A wave of intense silence swept over the crowd. Then came a roar from every throat. A small man on a white horse had appeared and was slowly, deliberately, attentively making his way through line after line of soldiers. Silence again. A word of praise was spoken here, an order given there, a frown of displeasure cast at some overlooked detail, a short colloquy took place with an officer.

Letizia's eyes grew dim. She reached for her handkerchief. How they loved him, worshipped him, these soldiers whom he had led into Italy, into far away Egypt, and who were now ready to follow wherever he commanded! Their eyes, fixed upon him, spoke eloquently for them. She imagined she could hear their words. "We are ready to give our lives that France may be great—that your name may be the first in the world. Where shall we go! We are ready. Lead the way." That is what they were saying to her child—her little Nabulio—her son of battle.

She felt her hand grasped and held. Turning, she found Lucien's face near hers. "Well, Maman—what do you think of it all?"

She could only smile an answer.

"Is it not evident what it is all leading toward!"

She looked up through tears of emotion.

Lucien smiled; then lowered his voice. "Straight toward a throne."

Letizia started. What was he saying! Her smile was

gone. Lucien's also. He was frowning as he watched the soldiers. "Republicanism was their dream. They thought, they still think, he would create it for them. They are his slaves. They will give him anything he asks of them. He will be a fool not to take it; a fool, too, if he does."

His words struck Letizia with disturbing significance. The same thought had been in her mind ever since that night of Brumaire. But was it his own idea! Was it not more what was thrust upon him! He seemed to be standing alone, all eyes turned upon him awaiting his words, his leadership, his direction. Could not all this adoration and trust be met simply! Was it impossible to accept this leadership without the outward symbols which had been destroyed during the revolution! Why was it necessary to move to the Luxembourg Palace and from there to the Tuileries! Those were the palaces of rulers who had lost their heads. Why not avoid such dangers! They represented what the people had given their lives to abolish. Her thoughts had surged about such questions. And yet she had kept silent. Others were closer to him now than she. Wordly glories were surely what his wife most desired. She made no secret of spending most of her time in receiving and writing letters to those emigrés who wished to return to France now that peace was restored. Already she was being called the protector of the nobility. And Napolione had not shown disapproval of such proceedings. He had even said he wanted the emigrés to return. All Frenchmen should live in France. He would make it a land of peace and happiness for every one. But also a land of glories! Joseph, now senator, expressed approval of this outward show. The girls too. Even her brother had fallen under this spell of extravagance and riches. Had he not come to Paris and immediately bought a handsome house with the profits of his business adventures in Corsica! Madness had taken possession

of them all. They were all showing themselves strangers to the principles and standards she had labored so to instill in them. They were showing themselves Carlo's children; not hers. All except Lucien. Perhaps he, now Minister of the Interior, would remain faithful to the simple desires of the people.

"Why so silent, Maman! Was the review not splendid enough to satisfy you?"

She was seated beside the First Consul at luncheon. The table was stretched to its full length and dressed with the silver and gold of dethroned monarchs. Gathered about it was a throng of unfamiliar faces.

"The review was your affair. That is your place. This," she sent a glance of disapproval at the glittering table, "is not."

Napolione smiled. "They expect me to live in splendor. They want it. They demand it. It is part of the glory that is theirs."

Letizia's eyes did not respond to the glow in his; nor to his words. She let the remark go unanswered. "Tell me of what you are planning now. I never see you any more. Joseph tells me you spend days and nights with the Council of State and that when others fall asleep you prod them awake. Will you never take any rest!"

Napolione laughed boisterously. Yes, he did have to poke them awake now and then. But there was so much to do. He was trying to thresh out the details of a civil code. In it he was embodying all his years of profound study. He wanted it to meet every requirement of the people. "I want it to go down in history as the Code Napoléon. It will please you, Maman, because there is much in it to do with women and children."

"I trust it may restrain them in the wearing of the obscene clothes I see about me."

Napolione's merriment increased. "Never fear. I'll see to that. Only last night I taught Josephine and her friends a lesson. We were all in the salon after dinner. I ordered the lackeys to build up the fires constantly. Finally the room became unbearably hot. Still I ordered more fire. When protests were made I explained that the ladies present were wearing so little that their health was in danger." His laughter continued as he encountered a softly reproving glance from Josephine. "Then I am creating a Legion of Honor," he went on seriously. "It is to be our way of rewarding merit, brave deeds, patriotism. It is to take the place of titles—an insignia of noble endeavor." His eyes dwelt upon his mother during a short silence. "It is not to be given to men alone. The first woman upon which the honor is to be bestowed is the Signora Letizia Buonaparte."

Letizia pressed his hand. For the second time that day her eyes were dim. "You are honor enough for me without that. But there is still one wish very near my heart. I wonder if you will bring it before the Council of State—for my sake, if not your own."

He turned toward her quickly. "What is it?"

"The restoration of the Church. Without religion the world is groping in the dark. We have been lost for ten years. What greater glory could you have than to restore freedom of worship to the people!"

Napolione nodded gravely. "I have already thought of that. But I must go slowly. I am not sure that Paris is ready for it yet. When I return from Italy there will be time to talk of a Concordat. We shall have a great Te Deum in Notre Dame. Then, Maman, will you go to Rome and be my ambassador to the Holy Father? I will write him it was you who made me take the step." His tone shifted lightly. "But we must have no defrocked priests in the family. Uncle Fesch must give up his speculations in property and return to the church."

"Nothing would make him happier. He only left the church because he would not take the republican oath which violated all church laws."

"Suppose I have him made cardinal! Would that please you?"

Letizia stared at him in amazement. Was there nothing he thought impossible!

He laughed at her expression. "You think it too much to hope for! You will see. Perhaps you doubt my ability, as many do, to send an army across the Alps. It is the only way to conquer the Austrians. Hannibal did it. Why not I!"

Letizia could not restrain a slight shudder. Madness again! Words failed her. She only murmured: "Napolione!"

"No, Maman, not Napolione any longer. That name belongs to Corsica. I am French now. You must call me as the French do—Napoléon."

Letizia found the house her brother had bought in the Rue Mont Blanc unnecessarily handsome. He was suffering from the same wild extravagance as all the others. However, it offered her a refuge of which she was quick to take advantage. At least there she would be able to escape the comings and goings of the people that filled Joseph's house; she could live quietly and according to her tastes; she could receive her Corsican friends when they came to Paris; and she could put aside and invest with her brother's help the huge sums Napoleon was bestowing upon her.

"But he is giving you these sums to spend!" her brother protested.

"He will be glad to know that I have safeguarded it when all this glory is passed."

Fesch smiled incredulously. "Why dwell upon the possibility of evil days, my sister?"

"When one has lived through so many, one cannot forget

they are likely to reappear." She opened the drawer of her desk and drew forth some papers. "Here are fifty thousand francs more that I wish to invest. You suggested a bank in Naples. Have you made inquiries?"

Fesch was not ready to enter into financial discussions. He considered it more important at that moment to have his sister suitably installed in his house. "Now that you have chosen the rooms you wish to occupy, you must consider decorating them properly. I have made a list of the furniture needed. The expense should not exceed fourteen thousand francs, everything included."

"Fourteen thousand francs! I remember the time, not so long ago, when that would have been a fortune to us. Can the rooms not be furnished for less?"

"Of course, much less; but not suitably for the mother of the First Consul."

It was almost impossible to combat these extravagant suggestions. She was opposed to great luxury; it was actually distasteful to her; but all of them seemed determined that she should have it. When one is nearing fifty one's needs become more and more simple. All true enough; but when one's children live magnificently, when one's son is the ruler of a great country like France, there are certain obligations to be observed. Napoleon had said himself that he did not want his wife to have anything that his mother did not have. In the end she was convinced against her better judgment. She chose two salons and a suite of rooms on the first floor; the rest of the large house she left to her brother and his now famous collection of paintings. The salons were quite spacious enough to hold the whole family. Here they could always come and find her when they needed her. As for going to them, she would do that once a week—at Sunday dinners when she was assured only the family would be present. She enjoyed presiding at the table as she had done

in Ajaccio. That was impossible when strangers were invited. Joseph and Lucien agreed graciously. Her days at Le Plessis and Mortfontaine were delightful. Napoleon was less amenable. The Tuileries gave no atmosphere of family life. Her visits there were formal and painful. But perhaps he was right. The ruler of a country had to forswear the intimacies of the family circle. Both he and his life belonged to the people.

"When are we going back to Corsica, Signora?" Saveria often asked.

The question invariably made Letizia sigh. "Chi lo sa! They are all here now. It would no longer be home without my children. Even my brother appears content in Paris. I must try to be. There is no telling when they may need me. They always have. They always will."

Costa di Basilica was the first of her old friends to seek her in her new home. He spent the entire evening with her. Over a quiet game of reversi he recounted all the news; and then confided to her his object in coming to Paris. He was seeking a government position on the island. He had thought the Citizen Consul would give him anything he desired. "But he has forgotten us, Signora Letizia. He no longer thinks of Corsica. His eyes wander elsewhere."

"His eyes wander over the whole world, Costa. But he never forgets. He knows that you saved my life. I will see that you have what you want. I will write to these fawning ministers he has appointed. It will give them a chance to show how sincere their bows and protestations are. We shall see if the mother of the ruler of France has any power. If Napolione had taken my advice he would have surrounded himself with Corsicans. One at least knows where one is with them. These people here——"

That night, with the help of her brother, who wrote for her in the language she had never learned, she sent off sev-

eral letters stating the position Costa desired and expressing her wish—in no evasive words—that it be granted him. Her success brought other islanders to her. Her house became their headquarters. Fouché, indefatigable as Minister of Police, facetiously asked the First Consul if his mother were instigating another Corsican rebellion. "Signora Letizia," Napoleon replied, "never forgets a friend. She would rather be useful to them than have them useful to herself." During the quiet days in which she lived so much alone, she let no opportunity pass by which she could prove to them that nothing, in her eyes, was too good for them. And they did much for her; they made Paris bearable; they robbed the long rainy days and dull evenings of dreariness; they were like sunlight streaming through the windows; they were always on hand when members of the family did not come to see her or when they had gone off to distant watering places to take cures for what she called imaginary diseases.

She encouraged herself with the belief that being there was not time wasted. Yet it seemed to her all the time that she was waiting. For what? To help her children. The thought, though, sometimes brought profound discouragement. Could any one help them now! She spent hours in prayer before the picture of the Madonna which Saveria had brought from Ajaccio. She clung to the thought that they would yet need her. Surely they would all come back to her. And she must always be ready to help them over bad places. That was her mission. She had given them of her best during their early years; she would give them of her best still. They might forget for a little while, filled with this madness of success that had come so suddenly, but there would come a time when they needed her. All this glory was too refulgent to endure.

When Napoleon returned from Italy, the Alps amazingly

crossed, the Austrians subdued, he the acclaimed hero of Marengo, one of the first questions she asked him was if he had forgotten his promise to her to re-establish the Church. Her insistence amused him. "I remember when I was a boy you used to punish me when I tried to escape going to mass. I believe you would like to do it still. Yes, I am going to keep my promise. I am going to begin overtures to the Papal States at once. And I am going to see to it that you, Maman, attend mass regularly—or punish you for not doing it. The first time I hear of your not going I shall cut your income in two."

In spite of the great joy which the signing of the Concordat and the cessation of religious persecution brought her—and that it should have been the achievement of her son!—the celebration of the Te Deum in Notre Dame, the outward sign that religious peace was once more restored throughout the country, was far from her wishes. Driving in state with Napoleon and Josephine, surrounded by liveried servants and gorgeously uniformed officials, she looked out upon what seemed to her to be a uselessly splendid display. All simplicity was forgotten. It was exactly like a procession of those monarchs who had lost their thrones—their heads.

"We cannot live as we did in Corsica, Maman. These people have chosen me their leader. The French worship show. They demand it."

"I thought it was too much show that brought on the revolution."

He chided her for her gloomy outlook and plunged into a discussion of the family. His interest in each one of them never flagged. No matter if he were selling Louisiana to the United States, planning the peace of Lunéville and Amiens, establishing the Bank of France, regulating the public debt, restoring order in remote provinces, he always had time to discuss family affairs with her.

"He must even tell us what sort of air to breathe," Paulette complained bitterly, rushing into the room one evening and breaking up a quiet game of reversi that Letizia and her brother were enjoying. "He is an absolute tyrant. Lucien always said he would be, once given the chance." She threw herself into a low chair and assumed an effective pose. "The chance seems to have come. They are talking now of making him Consul for life. Some say the next step will be king—emperor."

"Silenzio!" Letizia commanded. "Will you never cease talking like a child! Suppose others heard you say that! They would say he had inspired it."

"They would not be far wrong. What do you suppose he now suggests my doing! Not suggests—commands."

"Something entirely for your good, figlia mia. You know he loves you more than any of the others. He has always spoiled you."

Paulette tossed her lovely head. Only that day Moreau had compared it to a Greek divinity. "Spoiled me! Nonsense! He has always made me do exactly what pleased him. He would not let me marry Fréron. He made me marry Leclerc."

"And what could possibly have been wiser! In the end, you must admit he is always right."

"I shall not this time. It is absolutely incredible."

"What is?"

"He now has some fantastic idea about recovering San Domingo. Of course the old woman put him up to it."

"The old woman!"

"His wife—Josephine. She has property there. She wants him to subdue the blacks and make it a prosperous colony as it formerly was. I had to listen hours to his plans. He even read me lists of figures showing how industries there would increase the riches of France. You know how, once

started, he drools on forever. My head is actually splitting. Have you no sal volatile!"

Letizia called Saveria to fetch the restoring spirits. "But I cannot see, Paoletta, any connection between you and—what is it!—San Domingo!"

"Nor any one else—until you know that he is going to send Leclerc there on an expedition to conquer the blacks and restore order. And he insists that I go with him. I—in that barbarous land of poisonous reptiles and horrible disease! He said it would appeal to me; that it would be a beautiful adventure. Mon dieu!"

Letizia reflected deeply. "Does your husband wish to go?"

"Of course. He, like all the others, is willing to do anything Napoleon suggests. Why didn't he make him commander of Paris instead of Junot! But to send him off to that desperate island! It is too much to bear."

"It means promotion for your husband."

"For him, perhaps. I am thinking of myself."

"A wife must learn not to do that. Wherever your father went I accompanied him—happily, eagerly."

"But, Maman, times have changed. This is a new era. What use is there in having a brother First Consul if he sends me away from Paris! I will not go. No matter what Napoleon says, I will not go."

"I will speak to him," Letizia said quietly.

Joseph appeared next, his calm countenance lengthened with grievances. As head of the family he felt he had done more than should have been expected of him. He had given months and months to the exhausting problems of foreign relations. He had arranged a treaty with the envoys of the United States; he had signed with Austria at Lunéville; he had patched up some sort of an agreement with Great Britain at Amiens; he had signed the Concordat. He was utterly

exhausted and bored with giving every moment to another's glory.

"It shows how much he needs you, Joseph; how much he depends upon you. We must all help one another."

"But there is such a thing as having done one's part. I am tired. I need rest and quiet."

"Surely he will understand that if you tell him."

"He! Never! Before one thing is completed he is filled with plans for something else. He is pursued by the furies. He cannot rest. When I told him I was ready to retire from public life, he burst into laughter and said I had only begun, that he had decided to make me president of the Cisalpine Republic."

"That would be a great honor."

"I am tired of honors. I want to live a quiet life with my family and friends at Mortfontaine and in the new house I have just bought in Paris."

"Another house, Joseph!"

"One must take advantage of the bargains these days. My new house will please you, Maman. Do you remember the old Comte de Marbœuf who found places for Napoleon and me in the school at Brienne?"

Did she remember him! Did he imagine her gratitude was as short lived as that! But for Marbœuf they might still have been living quietly—and peacefully—in Ajaccio. Her thoughts dwelt gently on the old fairy godfather.

"I have bought his house in the Faubourg St. Honoré. It is a splendid mansion, with gardens extending to the Champs Elysées. Think of it, Maman! It was there that father was entertained when he made his first visit to Paris. Now it is mine."

His words were almost too fantastic to believe. Only a few years ago they were dependent upon the governor of Corsica for their education. Now they were living in his palace in Paris.

"And if Napoleon will only let me live quietly, I shall be perfectly happy," Joseph continued with a sigh. "I, at least, have no ambitions to rule the world."

Letizia sighed with him; but she said nothing. It seemed a moment when it was more useful to listen than to talk. Indeed, the days were filled, on her part, with silence and reflection. And they were far from being always cheerful thoughts. Louis' problem brought her many white nights. She had long ago sensed the charm of the Beauharnais girl. When Louis began to spend days at Malmaison, playing in those amateur theatricals with which they amused themselves so constantly, she felt the outcome was in sight. Slumbering resentment burned anew at the idea of another member of that family being allied to her. And yet—what could she do! Louis was young, he was under the influence of the splendor of the Tuileries, he was in the toils of that woman with the velvet voice. She wanted the match. She wanted everything that would increase her hold upon her husband. What could possibly draw the cords tighter than to marry her daughter to his brother? When Louis came in one day, threw himself into his mother's arms, and announced that he and Hortense were engaged, she felt that a knife had been turned in the wound.

"If this will make you happy, Louis, I can ask for nothing more."

Louis, strangely enough, did not appear romantic over the situation. He had nothing to say of his own emotions. Napoleon wanted the match. He seemed determined upon it. He had even said he would make their child his heir.

Letizia drew away coldly. "Is he to have no children of his own!"

"He seems to have given up hope of that. He says it is for Hortense and me to provide him with an heir."

"A woman who does not give her husband sons is not worthy the name of wife."

"Perhaps it is better as it is, Maman. In this way the inheritance will remain in our family."

Tidings came from Jerome. He had been sent off to the West Indies to gain naval experience with the fleet. His letters were glowing accounts of the different ports he had visited. He was looking forward with great interest to visiting the United States. The Admiral's reports were carefully worded. But there was no preparation for the announcement that he had married an American in Baltimore.

"I shall not recognize such a foolish affair," Napoleon exploded. "He is not of age. The marriage is not legal. He must have your consent, Maman; mine—Joseph's. If he insists upon bringing this woman to France, I shall give orders for her not to be permitted to land. I have other plans for him. These turtle-dove marriages are beneath notice."

"Lucien did the same. He has been very happy."

"It was different then. We had not found our place in the world. Now—they must let me decide for them. They must make themselves a part of my policy. They must think only of useful alliances."

Letizia did not attempt to disguise the frown that was in her eyes. She looked at her son as if she were seeing a stranger. Indeed, that was what he was becoming these days. They seemed to be going in entirely different directions. An insurmountable wall was rising between them. The prepotence of his youth was showing itself in a crushing force. Sometimes she felt that the sympathy that had always bound them so closely was diminishing. The realization brought a new element into her life—fear. Fear for him; fear for her love of him. She struggled against it, fought it, pushed aside thoughts that fed it. It was only human that he should think himself omnipotent. Every one told him he was. She must be patient, calm, control her

disapproval of his actions. Surely the time would come when he would see clearly again.

It was almost with a feeling of relief that she heard an attempt had been made upon his life when he was driving to the Opera on Christmas Eve to hear a rendering of Haydn's *Creation*. It gave her an opportunity to rush to him, gather him in her arms, hold him close in a maternal embrace. And he had responded to her gesture. In the presence of his wife, officials, generals he had maintained cold indifference, even contempt, at the failure of the infernal machine which was meant to end his existence. In his mother's arms he had trembled.

Yes, she had done right to remain in Paris. They needed her; all of them. She smiled with deep contentment. They did not know themselves how desperately they needed her.

Lucien's wife was dead; the gentle, sweet Catherine of those uncertain days in Marseille; Letizia's first daughter-in-law, the first to give her a grandchild. She hurried off to Le Plessis to be with her grief-stricken son. Another case of being needed.

The silence of the country was peaceful after the constant rumble of Paris. Long walks down the avenue of pleached limes were placid and restoring. The kindly sadness of autumn vistas, the soft gray brume of distances, the penetrating peacefulness: all made a sensitive background for wistful thoughts. To be there with Lucien during his first moments of loss was poignantly comforting to her. He was so much like her little boy again. It was turning back the pages of life and reliving lost days. It gave her ample leisure to look deep into the surging mind of this boy—for he was still that in spite of his twenty-four years; to try to understand him; to listen sympathetically to his passionate ambitions. Alone with her he seemed wholly

hers; and so absolutely different from Napoleon and Joseph. Much more a child.

But even in their peaceful retreat it was impossible to shut out the great world. Letters of condolence poured in from all quarters. He read them to her and told her of the people who had written them. Two he treasured above all the others; one from Madame Récamier, whom he described as la belle des belles; another from Chateaubriand, a man who would surely live through the ages because of his exquisite writings. The remembrance of these people seemed to soften his grief. Only now and then did a shadow fall between them—when he waxed eloquent over the wrong road Napoleon had taken. "Each day he goes farther and farther from the right path. He is forgetting what I fought so hard that day of Brumaire to preserve. He has forgotten that we are a republic." Though her heart sank at these words, Letizia held up a restraining hand. She would not listen to harsh words. Brothers must stand side by side; he and Napoleon most of all. Together they could accomplish great good; separated they would ruin one another.

The peaceful fortnight was of only too short duration. Word came from the Tuileries that the First Consul must see his brother at once. The command was brought to Lucien by his trusted friend, Fontanes; and along with it a huge bundle of letters from the Ministry of the Interior which must be signed at once. A rubber stamp expedited the matter of signatures; the command to appear at the Tuileries was not so easily disposed of.

"One would think he would leave me in peace at such a moment. I suppose it is more trouble fostered by Fouché."

Letizia's attention was caught. She had distrusted the Minister of Police from the first moment she had seen him. Subsequent stories of him had increased her doubt of his loyalty. "What trouble could he make between you and your brother?"

"He suspects every one in the world—most of all Joseph and me. He watches every move we make, every friend we have. He has already told Napoleon I have been conspiring against him—all because at times I criticise steps which do not meet with my approval. That is my right. Without me he would never have been head of the government. Fouché knows that. Josephine knows it too. They both fear my influence. They would like to see me got safely out of the way. They have been confederates for years. I have it on good authority that he pays her three thousand francs a month to keep him informed."

"Informed of what?"

"Of everything, as he expresses it, that he should know."

"She would not dare!"

Lucien's smile was bitter. "Maman, you know nothing of what these intriguers can and will do. Napoleon is surrounded by them; and listens to them. Their cleverness in misinterpreting everything that in any way affects their schemes is incredible. This—for instance." He held toward her a printed pamphlet in which the title stood out in bold letters: "Parallel between Cæsar, Cromwell, and Napoleon." Lucien's smile deepened as he watched her scan the pamphlet. "They have told him that I wrote it."

Whole phrases sprang from the printed pages to Letizia's eyes. "He has done what Cromwell did for England—Cæsar for Rome. . . He has restored order and prosperity out of the chaos of civil strife and ruin. . . . He has brought to France a new era of glory and greatness. . . . But, alas, he is subject to the same chances of death as common men. . . . Only discord and calamity would follow his disappearance. . . . The fate of thirty million hangs on the life of one man. . . . He should define his successors at once. . . . And who should they be but members of his own family. . . ."

Letizia nodded with approval. "Quite right. There is nothing to be ashamed of in this. Why should you not have written it!"

Lucien shrugged his shoulders. "We shall see what interpretation Fouché has given the matter. You may be sure that cutthroat of the Terror has found something in it that he will try to use against me."

When he returned late that evening, Letizia saw from his face that the meeting had not gone well. He threw himself into a chair and stared silently before him. He hardly returned the pressure of her hand.

"Napoleon has dismissed me from the government, Maman. I am no longer Minister of the Interior. He trusts Fouché more than me. I am disgraced."

Letizia rose with resolution. Her face was flushed; her eyes dark with resolution. "I shall go to see him myself. He shall not forget what you did for him. Every one says that without you he would never have been First Consul. I will make him see his duty. He has never yet failed to listen to me."

"It will do no good, Maman. Fouché and Josephine have his ear now. Both are against me."

"And I am against them."

She spent the long evening alone. Disturbing thoughts, fears, dismal forebodings possessed her. There was no longer any peace left in the world. They were all surrounded by enemies, enemies determined to break their strength by ranging them one against the other. In that lay certain downfall. Some one must hold them together; make them see clearly, frankly, calmly; force upon them the necessity of guarding their faith in each other through every baleful insinuation.

She rose early the next morning and called Saveria. She ordered her dresses spread before her. To the amazement

of her faithful companion she chose a costume Paulette had ordered for her months before which she had scornfully put away on account of its sumptuousness—a robe that swathed her from neck to feet in billows of black lace. Even the sleeves reached to her hands and partially covered their slim whiteness. A train swept out far behind her and showed a lining of orange-colored satin. A toque ornamented with white plumes and a diamond buckle covered her hair, which did not yet show any streaks of gray. The costume was more becoming than she would admit. It was a perfect setting for her white skin, her dark eyes, her strikingly arched eyebrows. It matched well the grave dignity of her bearing, her tremendous suggestion of power, her imposing presence which was now more and more akin to the antique prototype of which Carlo had so often spoken. Saveria sat on the floor and clasped her hands in admiration. "Signora, you make even the bella Signora Paoletta look like a ruba gallina." The comment was reassuring; though it was not her daughter she was trying to rival. It was the woman her son had chosen to rule with him. If fine trappings were the secret of her power, she would find that others could wield that influence too.

The drive into Paris was long and tedious, though her thoughts were too obsessing to admit fatigue. She answered the running fire of comment from Saveria without attention. She was concentrating solely on the interview before her. At last the Tuileries was reached, Antechambers and staircases were crowded with people awaiting a chance to speak with the First Consul. They bowed low as a way was made for the handsome woman who passed through their midst without appearing aware of their presence. She was conducted straight to the room where her son was closeted. When the door was thrown open and she saw who was with him, she stopped abruptly and raised her head. The stage

was already set for battle. Beside him sat his wife; and just beyond, leaning over his shoulder and indicating some papers on the desk, was the man who, according to Lucien, had caused all the trouble—Fouché.

Napoleon came forward, took her hands, kissed her on both cheeks, smiled into her eyes with frank admiration. "Maman—how magnificent you are to-day! You must be painted in that dress. I shall order Gérard to begin your portrait at once."

She disdained an answer and coldly took the hand extended her by Josephine. To Fouché she gave only a darting glance. "I have come from Lucien. He tells me you have dismissed him from the government. Why have you taken such a disloyal step?"

Napoleon dropped her hands, drew back, and met her flashing eyes with an ugly scowl. For a few moments they stood thus, both in the grip of anger, both resentful, both extraordinarily alike in their determined expressions. Napoleon was the first to move. "Maman, it would be better for us not to discuss purely political questions."

"This is not a political question. It is a misunderstanding between two brothers. I am the mother of both. It is my duty, my right, to see that justice is done. I demand to know why you have taken such a step."

Napoleon returned to his desk. Josephine sank into the chair beside him and turned her head away. Fouché pushed forward a chair, which Letizia did not notice.

"You have probably not heard of a pamphlet he has written." Napoleon picked up the paper from his desk. Letizia recognized it as the same she had seen the night before. "It would explain——"

"I have read enough of it to know that it is nothing but praise of you. If you are punishing him for that, you should punish the whole of France. Is he not right in stating that

you should appoint a successor! And who should that be but one of your family—one of your brothers—since you are to have no children of your own!"

Josephine's head sank lower. Tears were beginning to show in her eyes. She put up a hand to shield herself from the burning glance that had flashed upon her. "You are cruel," she murmured, almost inaudibly. "That is much more my despair than Bonaparte's.

"It is not only the question of heredity that he has advanced in this pamphlet," Napoleon continued coldly. "He has criticised the army. He has infuriated my generals. He said that without me they would become military tyrants and bring chaos once more upon France. The whole of the contents are offensive and dangerous. He suggests that I am preparing a dynasty."

"The people know who is the inspiration of that." Again Letizia's glance settled accusingly upon Josephine. "Every one knows your wife has allied herself more with the nobility than with your followers. They know that her ambitions——"

"No—no!" Josephine raised pleading hands. "That is false. Bonaparte will tell you that himself. Only last night I spoke to him of these rumors. I fear them as much as you. I admit my friends are of the Faubourg St. Germain—and for a reason. Nothing would give me more joy than to see the Bourbons restored to their throne and my husband made a Duke, a Constable of France. That would mean permanent peace. It would clear away, once for all, this ever-present, haunting nightmare of assassination. It would mean no lessening of glory for him. He would be another Turenne. No—no—I am the last person in the world to want him king! You misjudge me cruelly."

Letizia listened disdainfully. "King! Have you no better understanding of my son than to attribute such stupidity

to him. He knows too well he has risen out of the revolution that overthrew kings. It is against everything he stands for; and Lucien too; and"—her eyes met Napoleon's steadily—"most of all I."

Fouché listened with cynically curling lips. During the silence that followed the last words, he leaned forward and picked up some papers from the desk. "If Madame will be good enough to listen to a few reports that have been prepared for me regarding her son's activities, I believe she will admit that the Citizen Consul has not been unwise in deciding that his brother is a great danger to him as a member of the government."

Letizia could not bring herself to speak directly to Fouché; but with averted eyes she nodded and took the chair which had been placed for her. Fouché read the report in a calm, penetrating voice. It was a severe arraignment of Lucien's failure to fulfil his duties as minister. Disorder, waste, actual peculation were attributed to his ministry, if not to himself. He had showed neither interest nor loyalty in carrying out his duties. He had surrounded himself with journalists and men of letters who were only too ready and anxious to find fault with the government. It actually amounted to fomenting trouble. His indifference to his brother's success, even his life, had been an inspiration for the many recent attempts at assassination. His last step, the publication and distribution over the whole of France of this pamphlet, was the culmination of what could only be called, in the mildest terms, mischief-making.

Letizia could hardly restrain herself through the reading of the reports. When Fouché had ended, her eyes sought Napoleon's. "You believe what this man says!"

"He is my Minister of Police. He is the protector of my life. He should know."

"He probably knows much more than he confides in you.

It is common gossip that he pays your wife three thousand francs a month to keep him informed of everything that might otherwise escape him."

Josephine's sobs burst upon the tense silence of the room. "That is not true. You have no right to say that. Napoleon —protect me from such calumny. Your mother has always hated me. She does not care how much she wounds me. She is not just."

Napoleon rose quickly and thrust himself between them. His scowl was now darkly threatening. "Maman, you cannot speak to my wife in such terms. I forbid you to insult her. This has gone far enough. I will listen to no more."

Letizia did not move. Once again she found herself staring at her son as though he were a stranger; and one who, for the moment at least, she despised. He had never spoken to her in this way before. His words, his strident voice, his threatening scowl struck through her like a resounding roar. Horror swept over her. But she did not lower her eyes. She stared at him more steadily than before. A deadly pallor settled over her face. Her hands tightened on the arms of the chair. She appeared rooted inmovably to the spot where she sat.

For an interminable time no one spoke. Napoleon strode up and down the small room with hands clasped behind him. Josephine continued to sob softly. Fouché remained impassive and suggestive of some evil power that was moving these puppets about him.

"Va bene," Letizia said at last, her voice still determined in spite of a suggestion of utter weariness. "I shall say no more. If it has come to a point where a son of mine feels that he can command his mother to be silent—" She left the sentence unfinished. Then her head lifted with a gesture that was wholly commanding. "But I shall not leave here until these accusations against Lucien are retracted.

You shall not cast him aside after all he has done for you. It would do you more harm than him. He is your brother. You cannot declare to the world—even if you believe it—that you have no faith in your family. It would be as much as admitting you have no honor yourself."

Napoleon turned back to his desk with a gesture of desperate weariness. He thrust his hand into his tunic and let his head fall forward. "I have no intention of disgracing Lucien. I believe his intentions were good—only misdirected. I shall find some way out of this. I still trust him."

"Then prove it. Do not take the ministry from him."

Fouché made a quick movement. Napoleon held up a reassuring hand.

"I have already done that and appointed his successor. It is better so. I shall find some other position for him."

"What?"

"It will take time. It is——"

"Why cannot you decide now! Delay means that people will know what has happened. It will then be too late to remedy the evil."

She still sat immovably in the chair. There was something inescapable in her determination. She gave the impression that nothing could move her until she was ready. Fouché shot a sidelong glance at her, full of hidden design, yet subtly admiring. Josephine, with handkerchief to her eyes, had turned away toward a window. Napoleon, deep in thought, leaned forward on the desk.

"There is important work to be done in Madrid and Portugal," Napoleon finally spoke, his voice low and reflective. "I have been looking for some one to send there. I intend to separate Portugal from its alliance with Britain. Lucien could do that well."

"What would be his position there?"

"Ambassador of France."

Letizia's rigidity slowly relaxed. The color came gradually back into her face. The anger faded from her eyes. "Will you appoint him ambassador at once?"

Napoleon rose and came toward her with extended hands. He did not attempt to hide a deep sigh of relief. "To-day, Maman, if that will make your happy."

She rose, still holding his hands. For a moment she showed hesitation, indecision. Then, with a dignity that had suddenly softened into womanliness, she crossed the room toward Josephine.

"When it is a question of defending my children," she said with one of her rare smiles, "I forget everything but the battle I am fighting. I defend them with all the power that is in me. They are my tokens of honor."

II

Letizia became more and more convinced that her residence in Paris was necessary. Hardly a week passed that she did not find herself called upon to take some decisive step in regard to her children; or to help them take the decisive step. Due to her calm insistence, Paulette had finally been persuaded—though in a tempest of rage against her mother and the whole family, especially Napoleon—to follow her husband to San Domingo; though not before she had delayed the sailing of the fleet three weeks while she selected a trousseau suitable for the tropics. Also, due to her determination, Lucien had been made ambassador and had left for Madrid, taking along with him as secretary Elisa's husband, Bacciochi, and a carriage full of books pertaining to ambassadors and their functions. Her brother Fesch had re-entered the church and, through her indefatigable suggestions to Napoleon, had been made archbishop and then cardinal. She had even seen that a personal letter from the First Consul had been sent to the Holy Father stating that the appointment of Fesch was one of his fondest desires. His departure to take up his ecclesiastical duties at Lyons was a profound sorrow to her, for beyond the pride and satisfaction of seeing him once more in the career he had originally prepared himself for—and from simple abbé of Ajaccio to cardinal of Lyons was a dazzling step —she missed him desperately. Their evenings together had been so calm and peaceful. But there was Caroline to look after, with a husband away in command of the army marching against Naples, and the baby, little Achille, who had just arrived. There was Elisa, too, also left without a hus-

band, but who apparently amused herself contentedly with Lucien's literary friends and carried on a spirited correspondence with the famous Chateaubriand. Except for Jerome's adventures in America and the uncertain outcome of his alliance; and Louis' health, which had necessitated a long voyage into Germany, she felt that she had a firm grasp on the leading-strings. Even Napoleon had shown himself lately much more amenable to her wishes. After the signing of the Concordat he had shown interest in her suggestion that all sisters of charity that had been excluded from the hospitals during the revolution be recalled and given greater freedom and assistance in their work of mercy. "Our family has always been important in the church. Now is the time to show your devotion to the faith in which you were brought up. Besides political peace, you can give the world religious peace—by far a more important and enduring gift." And there were numerous charities that began to engage her attention. In Ajaccio, even in Marseille, she had always remembered the poor. In Paris, there seemed no end to their needs. To begin with, there were the widows and orphans of those soldiers who had made her son's glory possible. She wrote personal letters to every member of the government; the Consulate listened to her pleas; and in the end a pension was created for destitute patriots and their families.

Now that she had settled down in the house her brother had left to her care—she had closed its vast suites, kept only her own rooms open, dismissed the train of servants he had thought obligatory, kept only a cook and maid—the time passed quietly and contentedly with Saveria as her closest companion. Only one disturbing element ruined the period of real peace—the alarming rumors of continued attempts upon Napoleon's life. In the evenings, alone before the fire, her fears deepened into ominous foreboding. The patter of

incessant rain was conducive to sombre thoughts. What a city to make the seat of government! Now, if Ajaccio had been chosen, one would not have to hover over a miserable blaze to keep the blood from congealing. One would only have to open the windows and let the sun in. Visions of olive-groves, orange-trees laden with golden fruit, almond-blossoms, blue sea swam before her. A penetrating nostalgia possessed her. Would she ever be able to return there! Was she really as much needed here as she liked to think!

A sharp, imperious sound from the door-bell struck into the room. Saveria sprang up with alarm. At this hour of the night no one ever called.

"Shall I answer it, Signora?"

Letizia controlled her fears. "Of course. What is there to be alarmed at!" Her eyes brightened. "Perhaps it is some one from Corsica."

She waited impatiently while Saveria left the room. Why did she take so long! When she returned alone, Letizia's countenance fell. "It was no one?"

"Si, si, Signora—a signore." Saveria's eyes danced. "And he comes from Corsica."

Letizia rose quickly. "Why did you not bring him in! You know every one from Corsica is welcome."

"He asked if you would receive him, Signora. I told him yes. He insisted that he be announced."

"Who is he? What is his name?"

"He would not give it. But he said he knew you well."

"Show him in."

Saveria threw the door open and a small man in a long redingote and a high castor hat came quietly into the room. There was something almost comic in his appearance. The high hat and long coat appeared entirely too big for his small figure; and there was something awkward in his bearing as if he were not accustomed to such clothes.

Letizia felt a slight embarrassment. She was sure she knew the man; there was something extraordinarily familiar about him; yet she could not place him.

He made a low bow. "Signora Letizia Buonaparte." The voice sounded familiar too. The accent was entirely Corsican. Then, breaking into loud laughter, he dragged the high hat from his head.

Letizia extended her arms and pulled him to her. "My son! To think I did not know you! But these clothes! They do not suit you. They make you into another person. No one would ever recognize you in them."

"Exactly what I intended, Maman. I am utterly worn out with being eternally watched and followed—both day and night. Even Josephine will not let me sleep in a room by myself. There is such a thing as too much care. I determined to escape from them all to-night. Perhaps already Fouché has sounded the alarm that I have disappeared. But let them worry a little." He sank into the chair before the fire and sighed comfortably. "How quiet and peaceful it is here! I wonder I have not thought of coming like this before."

Letizia moved about the room seeking ways to make him more comfortable. He must put his feet on the footstool. He had better take off his boots. They were soaking wet. She would get him a pair of her slippers. His feet were small enough to wear them. Now—was that not much better! Had he dined? Would he not like Saveria to make him a dish of maccheroni? Nothing would please him better. He had eaten hardly anything that evening. He had found a string in the beans. He shuddered over the memory. Did she not remember how that had always turned his stomach! He had ordered the chef of the Tuileries to be locked up for a week.

Saveria rushed off to boil water and prepare a sauce of

tomatoes and Parmesan cheese. If she had charge of the Primo Console she would fatten him up at once. He would soon have a respectable paunch—as all great men should and did have.

He brought a sack full of news, as he expressed it. Paulette had arrived safely in San Domingo, but only after a terrible voyage. They had encountered storms and enemies along the way. But that was now all past and Leclerc was having his hands full subduing the natives. Louis had written from Berlin that he had been entertained by the King of Prussia and was enjoying court life immensely. He was feeling much stronger and would soon return for his marriage to Hortense. Josephine wanted to make it a tremendous affair. She was planning all sorts of balls and elaborate entertainments. "Since I have been made Consul for life, the Senate has given me the right to choose my successor. My thoughts turn invariably to Louis. After his marriage I shall make my decision public. He is the one to follow me. He has none of the defects of my other brothers and all their good qualities."

"Your successor should be your own child."

Napoleon's eyes grew dim. "Alas, Maman, that seems hopeless. We have consulted every doctor of note. Josephine has been constantly to Plombières where the waters are supposed to develop fecundity. Always without result." He dashed tears from his eyes. "If I am to have a son, there seems only one way possible."

"What way?"

"Divorce."

Letizia held her breath. Her heart was pounding with uncontrollable joy. Divorce from the woman she hated! It would not be difficult, either. The union had never received the sanction of the church.

The silence between them deepened. The murmur of rain

Louis Bonaparte, King of Holland.

filtered into the room. A spark from the fire spluttered and fell onto the hearth. Napoleon leaned forward and kicked it back into place.

"But that will only be a last resort—when all other hopes have failed." He straightened up as if to push aside miserable thoughts. "I have excellent reports from Madrid. Lucien's despatches tell of great progress. He has been flatteringly received by the King and Queen. He writes that they are loading him with favors and that he is received in private audience whenever he wishes it. Already he has got far along with the treaties I intrusted to him; one of alliance between the Republic and Spain with the object of forcing Portugal to close her ports against England; one for joint action against the British; and still another for creating the kingdom of Etruria in Tuscany for the benefit of the Infanta. If she were only a widow I would suggest that Lucien marry her and be made king of Etruria. How would you like a king for a son, Maman—especially your darling Lucien?"

Letizia shook her head firmly. "I want no empty titles for my sons. A throne is only a piece of board covered with velvet. My sons can be kings without that. Let their deeds crown them." Her eyes brightened. "But you see I was right about Lucien. You and he must always be friends. But for me you would still have been quarrelling."

Napoleon nodded; then his eyes grew grave. "Why are you so opposed to a son being king, Maman?"

Letizia reached for her knitting. With hands occupied, she could think better, talk better. The question did not take her by surprise. She had heard it advanced many times before. All the children seemed to think Napoleon was going in that direction. And yet, each time she heard it mentioned, her heart seemed to stop beating.

Napoleon watched her intently. "Have you no good reasons to offer in explanation?"

She looked at him long, tenderly, sadly. "My only reasons are in my heart. It tells me that such a step would mean your downfall. Why turn the love of the people into envy and hate! They have made you their leader; they have given you their devotion—their lives. You are now more than king. Why accept a title that will only make enemies and do no good! Already I tremble each day for your life. It is wholly that phantom throne that is ranging all these sinister forces against you. Let the people know once for all that you want nothing but to serve them and give them peace."

"Peace is a question of power."

"Who has more power than you to-day! They have made you Consul for life."

"That is not enough. There is significance in a name. Emperor of the French carries with it a definite suggestion that would impress other nations. You call it empty because it means nothing to you. To the world it would represent everything. It is a symbol. As for the people, the French, they would see in it only what the Romans saw. The empire of the Cæsars combined absolute power with republican ideals."

"Mark my words, my son. It will be your downfall—your death."

Napoleon rose impatiently from the comfortable chair. "I came here to spend a happy evening with you, Maman. You have always counselled me so well. You would not let me go back to Corsica. You said it was too small for me; that I was born for greater things. Yet now, when they want to make me emperor, you shiver and moan and cross your fingers to ward off the evil eye. It is not like you. You are becoming as foolish as Josephine. She is always seeking mauvaises augures. Only the other day when I dropped a snuff-box with her miniature by Isabey on the lid and it

broke, she burst into tears and has been weeping ever since. She says it means some dreadful disaster is going to befall us. How emotional you women are!"

"Perhaps it is more intuition than emotion. Perhaps it is even more than that. I hear of nothing but plots against your life."

Napoleon sank again into the chair before the fire and lowered his head slowly. "I shall soon make an end of all that. I know now the source from which they emanate. They are all inspired by England. They cuddle and encourage and pretend to protect all those emigrés who have taken refuge there. They think because they broke the treaty of Amiens and took Egypt from me that they can conquer me. But they never will—so long as I live."

Letizia tried to hide the shudder that swept over her. "So long as you live! Ah—that is it! They are inspiring men to assassinate you by telling them it is not a crime to kill a tyrant."

Napoleon smiled scornfully. "Tyrant! They call me that —those Bourbons, those filthy English, those bloody Jacobins! Well—I will show them I can be a tyrant—against them. I have a list of them all. Not one name is missing. And I know where their headquarters are. A Bourbon prince is their leader—a scion of the house of Condé—the Duc d'Enghien. Talleyrand has furnished me with complete details."

Letizia dropped her knitting. "That man! You trust him still!"

"He believes this is the moment to strike and make an example of one man that will impress the others. It is the only way to put a stop to their plots."

"No—no—my son! Do not listen to that white-faced, limping, defrocked priest. A descendant of the great Condé, no matter if he is an emigré and opposed to the present gov-

ernment—holds a place in the hearts of all Frenchmen. I remember you, as a boy, spoke with great admiration of his place in history. Surely you have not forgotten that. No—no; you have been evilly counselled. If you harmed a Condé they would have the right to call you tyrant."

"Then you would rather have me assassinated than——"

"You will never be assassinated if you make it known that you have no intention of occupying the place of dethroned kings—of that beheaded Louis XVI. Already hundreds of emigrés are returning. They know that you are offering them protection and the restoration of their property."

"They know that, yes; and yet they are plotting for the return of that fat pig, the Duc de Provence."

"Only a few. They are negligible. The great majority trust you, want you. Do not give them a chance to call you tyrant—even murderer. If you should harm this Duc d'Enghien I fear almost anything. He is beloved of France. France is beloved of him."

"If he loves France he should be fighting for me—not against me."

"He may do that yet. At least give him the chance."

Saveria announced that the maccheroni was ready. Napoleon sprang up and reached for his hat.

"But, my son—" Letizia exclaimed in consternation.

Napoleon put on his hat. "I am no longer hungry. I am going to return to the Tuileries. They understand me better there."

The wanderers were returning, one by one. First Louis, from his royal reception in Prussia, apparently restored in health and ready to go through with the marriage Josephine had so long been planning. Letizia accepted this second alliance with the Beauharnais clan with silence and as good

grace as she could muster. Two incidents brought her a modicum of comfort. The marriage was to have the sanction of the church; the only one of her sons besides Joseph who had received this blessing. She prayed that the religious observance might do much to make successful a union of which she had grave doubts. The decision furnished her an inspiration. She had no sooner heard it than she hurried to Caroline with the suggestion that she and Murat take advantage of the occasion to have their marriage also receive the benediction of the church. To her great joy they consented. A temporary chapel was arranged in the house in the Rue Chantereine—now rechristened Rue de la Victoire —where Napoleon and Josephine had first lived and which was to be presented to the bride as a wedding-gift. There Letizia witnessed the double ceremony with many shifting thoughts. Comparison with past days indicated a brilliant future for the couple. Everything was gaiety and prosperity. She had only to glance at the marriage contract to feel that material comfort at least was assured them. The bride's dower seemed to her dazzling; this house and garden; a quarter of a million francs from Napoleon; a hundred more from Josephine. How different it had been with the other children! She kissed her new daughter-in-law with confused emotions. She was very lovely, very gentle, very dignified. Somehow she commanded respect. If she had been anything else than a Beauharnais Letizia felt that she might have loved her.

Then Paulette returned, after a year's absence in distant lands, bringing back with her a golden urn which contained the heart of her husband—swathed in her own hair, widow's token of despair—who had died that a colony of France might be held in subjection. The urn bore an inscription which she had written herself. "Paulette Bonaparte, married to General Leclerc the 20th Prairial of the

Year V has enclosed in this urn all the great love she bore her husband with whom she shared every danger and every glory. His son will never look upon this sad and dear heritage without profoundly cherishing his father's virtues."

Letizia spent days at the bedside of this bereaved daughter, bathed her wasted body, cared unceasingly for the ugly sore—souvenir of the tropics—which disfigured her lovely hand, and tried to stifle the despair that she felt each time she looked at the despoiled beauty of her child. Could she ever nurse her back to health and that radiant loveliness that had brought every one to her feet!

The stories Paulette recounted made her own early experiences in Corsica, even Napoleon's mighty campaigns, dwindle into insignificance. Seated beside the chaise longue, knitting through the hours, she listened, often wholly bewildered, to the strange chatter of this child that she loved so deeply. Subjects intermingled in a most baffling way. It was almost impossible to follow any story to a logical conclusion.

"Caroline sent me this book, Maman. It is called *Usages.* It gives all the regulations and etiquette for a widow's trousseau. Mourning for a husband should last one year and six months. . . . You and Napoleon think you are the only ones with real courage in the family. You have seen nothing. At first all went well. Leclerc subdued the leaders of the revolution. He restored peace to the whole colony. We thought everything was settled. Then a second uprising of the blacks began. Our food became scarce. The reinforcement of soldiers from France never arrived. We were without money—without help. Then yellow fever broke out. . . . The etiquette changes periodically. For the first three months only black woollen garments are worn with a fichu of crape—black for six weeks, then white for the ensuing six weeks. . . . It was terrifying, Maman. Every

one was dying, generals, administrators, officers, soldiers. The medicines sent out to us arrived completely ruined. They had to be thrown in the sea. Leclerc insisted that I take Dermide and go to another island. Of course I would do nothing of the sort. I gave balls instead—concerts, musicales, dances, masquerades. It was the only way to forget. They called my house the rendezvous of the coffins because those who came often went away and immediately died. But it was as little as I could do for them. It made them forget, at least for a few hours, that death was stalking about us. When I drove along the sea in search of a breath of fresh air, I always returned with dying soldiers whom I had picked up along the way. Every time Leclerc suggested that I leave, I would laugh at him and tell him nothing would make me go, that there I reigned like Josephine, that I was actually a queen. To the women who threw themselves at my feet and pleaded with me to fly and take them with me, I replied: 'What is there to fear! I am the sister of Bonaparte. We are afraid of nothing. We never run away from danger. We stay and conquer.' . . . The six following months black silk dresses with head-dress of white crape trimmed with fringe. . . . One day Leclerc sent his aide-de-camp to carry me and Dermide to a boat in the harbor. The blacks were now in sight of our house. There seemed no hope. I was in the midst of giving a fancy-dress party for the children. Dermide was dressed like a grenadier with a helmet and sword. You should have seen the darling. The aide-de-camp insisted that I follow him at once. In reply I sat down in a chair and picked Dermide up in my lap. Seeing that I was determined, the aide ordered his soldiers to pick me up in the chair and carry me to the boat. It was exactly like a scene at one of those masquerades at the Opera. I laughed all the way; and the soldiers laughed with me, though the sound of cannon was all the time grow-

ing nearer and nearer. Just as they were taking me on board, still in the chair with Dermide in my lap, tidings came that the blacks had been routed and that we could return with safety to the house. . . . Three months more of black and white—black of course predominating. . . . Three days later Leclerc was stricken with the fever. In a fortnight he was dead. . . . The last six weeks both dress and hat should be all white. How I hate black. I think I shall begin with white. They say black is fatal for the health. Do I look so dreadful, Maman! Let me look at myself." She grasped the mirror and gazed a long time at her pallid countenance. Finally she tossed it aside. "Never mind. I'll come back. I am in Paris now. I shall soon begin to live again. Napoleon has promised to buy the Hôtel Charost for me. It is only right that he should do everything in his power to repair the damage he has done me. It will cost four hundred thousand francs. But it is worth it. There is a lovely garden leading to the Champs Elysées. Joseph is not the only one who deserves fine houses. It will amuse me to do it over in modern style. Will you hand me that bonnet, Maman? Do you think it becoming? How I detest black!"

There was no end to her chatter. Letizia felt helpless under the rain of words. And the extravagance of it all—words, sentiments, plans. Four hundred thousand francs for a house! It was the same also with Lucien when he returned from Madrid, which he had left without his brother's consent.

"I couldn't spend the rest of my life there, Maman. I did my duty—what he sent me for. In two months I signed three treaties. Then, in spite of that bête noir, Talleyrand, I finally arranged the treaty of Badajoz. Is that enough for a while! My friends wanted me back here; and I wanted to be with them. Now I shall buy the Hôtel de Brienne in the Rue St. Dominique and establish myself there permanently."

"But that is a palace, my son!"

"I can afford it. And I can afford something else that will give me even more pleasure. I have arranged with my bankers to pay you twenty-four thousand francs a year. You need no longer say you are dependent upon Napoleon for your living. It is not necessary for you to live in Paris any longer if you do not wish to. And if you do not need this sum for yourself, you can spend it on some of those numerous charities you are instituting. At any rate, it is yours to do with as you please."

Letizia grew reflective. Great sums were becoming meaningless to her. One talked about francs now as if they grew on trees and only had to be plucked. "I shall use some of it for my charities, Lucien. The rest I shall put aside for you and the others when you need it. Already I have a fortune stored away." Then doubts took possession of her. "But I do not understand how an ambassador gathers so many riches."

Lucien laughed gaily. "Of course you don't, Maman; neither do the others. It used to be the custom to give plenipotentiaries who signed treaties snuff-boxes, baubles like that, worth nothing at all. The King of Spain wished to express his gratitude to me in a more substantial way. Knowing my penchant for famous paintings, he presented me with twenty old masters from the Royal Gallery. Later he gave me two hundred crowns worth of jewels. Then, as a parting gift, he sent me his portrait; but with the portrait came a note from him warning me to unpack the case myself. What do you suppose I found in it! A package of diamonds; not Spanish—Brazilian, worth at least half a million francs." He leaned back with a broad smile. "That is the way this ambassador made his exile from France worth while."

Letizia nodded. Lucien, more than the others, had a way

of explaining things so that she could understand them. "But you must have been desperately lonely there among all those strangers. Was there no one to interest you?" She hesitated; then looked at him intently. "Have you not thought of marrying again? The children need a mother's care."

Lucien met her eyes and colored. "Has some one been telling you tales?"

"Elisa has mentioned some woman—a Madame Jouberthou I think was the name."

"Elisa—of course. She is always snooping about. Yes—it is true. I was going to tell you of her. She is the first woman I have thought of seriously since my beloved Catherine's death. She is the widow of a financier who failed and deserted her. As soon as we have absolute proof that her husband is dead I shall make her my wife." Lucien reached for his mother's hands. "Already we have been married by a priest."

Letizia drew away from him. "Again, Lucien, without consulting me!"

"I couldn't, Maman. And it must be kept secret until the civil marriage is a fait accompli. I don't want Napoleon to know of it yet."

Letizia sensed danger. "Why not, Lucien?"

"He has just offered to make me king of Etruria. The Infanta's husband has died and it fits in with his political schemes that I marry the widow." Lucien threw back his head and laughed noisily. "I wish you could see her! I knew her in Madrid. In Corsica they would call her a bruta vecchia."

"You have not quarrelled with Napolione again!"

"Not quarrelled—only disagreed. But I shall never let him choose a wife for me. Why should I! He did not marry to please me."

"Nor me," Letizia murmured under her breath.

"I look upon marriage as apart from public life; something one must decide for oneself; something that is inspired by love alone."

Letizia reached for his hand and held it against her cheek. "Sometimes, Lucien, I think you are more wholly my son than any of the others. You must bring this woman to see me at once. If she is so near your heart, she will be near mine too."

"Of course it is going to raise an awful row. You will see. Elisa has already turned her back on me. Joseph disapproves, too. But they are both obsessed with all this talk about Napoleon's successor. We had a long discussion about it the other day. Joseph insists, as the head of the family, that he should be the first in order of succession; that after him I should come; then Louis. But, as you know, Napoleon has his heart set on Louis. Naturally, that's due to the old woman, now that she has got her daughter married to him. But Louis is worth nothing. He is already a malade imaginaire. At any rate, Joseph won out in the argument. I really believe Napoleon loves Joseph more than any of us. But he did have a wonderful revenge!" Again he burst into loud laughter. "When he finally consented he told Joseph that, as his successor, he must take up a military career. He is going to send him off to Boulogne as colonel of a regiment. Can't you see poor old Joseph drilling soldiers from early morn until late at night! I wonder how long he will stand it!" His laughter died away into a grave expression. "Of course, if the Senate actually does consent to Napoleon making himself emperor——"

Letizia rose restlessly. "Silenzio! I will hear nothing of that. I have told him it is impossible. It will mean only one thing—disaster."

"Nevertheless, Maman, it is coming. It is now only a question of time."

Lucien's words seemed prophetic. Try as hard as she might to put them out of her thoughts, Letizia found it impossible. Her brother wrote her from his cardinal's palace in Lyons that all rumors there pointed toward the establishment of an empire; that there was little opposition to the idea; that, in fact, such was the adoration of the people that they looked upon it as representing the future peace and safety of France. "I have an idea that is the reason for my recent appointment as ambassador to Rome—to ascertain how the Holy Father would receive such a step." Caroline and Elisa made no pretense of hiding their joy at the idea. "If he is made emperor, Maman, we shall all be princesses. And you, you will be Altesse Imperiale. You know you would like that!"

Letizia frowned them into silence. "I shall never be anything but what I am now, Letizia Buonaparte. Empty titles mean nothing to me."

Paulette, established in her new house, apparently entirely recovered from her San Domingo experiences and looking more beautiful than ever in her dramatic use of crape—she had now reached the all-white stage—listened to their gossip with glowing eyes. "Why shouldn't he be emperor if the people want him that! He deserves much more than they can ever give him. As for being a princess," she smiled patronizingly, "that does not interest me so much. I have just decided to become one by marriage. Prince Borghese has asked me to marry him. It means leaving Paris and living in an old palace in Rome. But that ought to be amusing—at least for a while."

Letizia listened to their frivolous talk with sinking heart. It was well enough talking about Napoleon's great popu-

larity, but were there not increasing evidences of assassinating him! Only recently the guard of the Tuileries had been doubled, quadrupled. Murat, now commander of Paris, was taking drastic steps to safeguard the life of his brother-in-law. General Moreau, champion of republicans, had been suspected and thrown into prison. Thirteen conspirators had been found guilty and executed. One of them had confessed that a Bourbon prince was leading the plot, the Duc d'Enghien, thus giving authority to Talleyrand's suspicions. Was this not evidence enough that the establishment of the empire was a grave danger! Letizia's fears increased. They became an obsession. But no one would listen to her, least of all this dazzling star that had found life in her womb. More and more she withdrew from those about her and shut herself in her room. The velvet cushion of her prie-dieu became worn with constant use. She spent hours before the picture of the Madonna. If only some power might be given her with which she could make her son see the tragedy that awaited him! It was here Saveria found her one evening and, breaking an iron-clad rule that she must never be disturbed during her prayers, burst out with a startling announcement.

"The Signore Console's wife is here. She says she must see you at once."

Letizia rose with fast-crowding fears. This must mean disaster. Nothing else could have brought Josephine to her. The few visits exchanged between them had invariably been formal and previously announced. She hurried into the salon and found her visitor crouched in a chair, weeping with complete abandon. The tears were streaming down her face and leaving disastrous marks in the heavy coat of powder.

Letizia stopped, calm with certain despair. "Have they succeeded? My son——"

Josephine threw herself into her arms and burst into renewed sobs. Letizia held her firmly; then shook her almost violently. "Control yourself. Tell me what it is. I can bear it. Is he dead?"

"No—no! It is not that." She vainly attempted to stop her tears. "But it will mean that surely. A few days ago he sent orders for the capture of the Duc d'Enghien. A raid was made across the frontier. He was taken and brought to Vincennes. He is there now. He is being tried. If they find him guilty——"

"You think they will dare kill him?"

"Yes. I am certain of it. Napoleon will not listen to me. I have done everything in my power to make him promise he will delay the execution. He drove me from the room. I come now to beseech you to help me—not me—him. He listens to you. You are the only one who can now save him."

Letizia did not call Saveria to fetch her hat and mantle; she went for them herself. In a few minutes she was seated beside Josephine in the carriage. On the way to the Tuileries she heard the whole story; but it was only a repetition of what she had heard before. She listened without speaking, hardly hearing the words that flowed so brokenly in the velvet voice.

When they entered the salon at the Tuileries, Letizia sent a quick glance about the room. Napoleon was seated at the far end of the room playing chess with Murat. Beside him stood the two men she distrusted most—Fouché and Talleyrand. Discouragement swept over her. There was no one she could expect help from but this weeping, hysterical woman who had brought her there. They advanced slowly into the room. Fouché held up a warning hand. The Consul must not be disturbed at that moment. His thoughts were entirely on the game of chess. An important move was on the point of being made. Letizia sank into a chair, glad of a

few moments of concentration. Josephine moved toward the table and laid her hand gently on her husband's shoulder. Finally he made the decision, moved a pawn, settled back in his chair, smiled, and looked up.

"Your mother is here, Bonaparte. She has come to see you."

Napoleon's smile vanished. A frown took its place. His eyes, suddenly dark and troubled, swept across the room toward his mother. "Ah—Signora Letizia," he said coldly. "What brings you out at this hour of the night?"

The tone of his voice, his eyes, his manner of addressing her—he never called her Signora Letizia except in playfulness or in anger—made her realize that her visit was not welcome. "I have come to talk with you—alone."

Napoleon pushed back his chair, swept one hand over the board, thus scattering the pawns, and rose, "Did Josephine fetch you here? If she did, you might as well understand—once for all—that your visit is useless." He crossed the room and stood before her. "Women should not meddle in this sort of an affair. My politics demand a coup d'état. I have been forced to decide between one decisive action and an endless continuance of conspiracies in which there would be daily punishments. This one step will place me clearly before the world."

"It will, my son. There is no doubt of that."

Napoleon threw his head up impatiently. "The royalists are ceaseless in their activities. They are compromising my position. The Duc d'Enghien has led their conspiracies. He is determined to break up the peace I have brought to France. He is serving the vengeance of the English. His military reputation and that of his ancestors influence the army. Once he is dead, our soldiers will have broken forever with the Bourbons."

"His death will give them the right to call you tyrant."

"In politics a death which brings peace is not a crime. If he is found guilty he will be shot."

Letizia's lips moved silently. Twice she seemed on the point of speaking, then stopped. When words finally came, they were spoken vibrantly, prophetically. "My son, if you allow this execution, you will be the first to fall into the abyss you have opened beneath the feet of your family!"

Josephine sank on her knees and clasped her hands. "If you will but see him yourself! He has asked that of you. He says that if you will listen to him you will understand that he has done only his duty. No compromising documents have yet been found."

"The court martial is in charge of that. My orders are to act only after certainty. I am awaiting General Savary now. He should be here at any moment. He will tell us what the court martial has decided to do."

"Why are you leaving the decision to others?" Letizia's eyes flashed toward Talleyrand and Fouché. "You are the only one who should judge. The decision is not theirs. It is yours. You are the one the world will hold responsible." She rose slowly and extended her hands. "My son—it is not right that I should demand justice from you. I have spent the best years of my life instilling it in you. This is a moment in which all I have meant to you stands or falls. Are you going to fail me?"

Her eyes were no longer angry and commanding; they were infinitely sad, pleading, poignant. With extended hands she waited. Talleyrand's pallor grew deadly. Fouché's eyes flashed contemptuously. Murat leaned against the table with assumed insouciance. No sound broke the stillness but Josephine's incessant sobs.

At last Napoleon turned away and crossed the room. Every pair of eyes followed him. At the far end of the room he turned and came back slowly toward his mother. Sud-

denly, as if having reached a decision, he raised his hand and motioned to Murat. His hand was still raised when a noise from the corridor broke into the room. General Savary stood on the threshold. His countenance struck into the silent room like a blow. No words were necessary. His pallid face, his trembling lips, his unsteady hand told the whole story.

Napoleon faced him, drawing himself up as if gathering his forces to hear the words. "Well—General?"

"Citizen Consul—the Duc d'Enghien is dead."

"He confessed his guilt!"

"He only asked how it was possible for a Condé to return to his homeland except under arms."

Napoleon drew in his breath slowly. For a few moments he said nothing. Then he turned toward his mother. But her eyes were not upon him. They were bent upon Savary. Finally, with an imperious gesture, she motioned him to come nearer. "What else did he say?"

Savary approached carefully, cast an inquiring glance at the Consul as if asking permission to speak, received a short nod, and bowed deeply before Letizia.

"Madame, I am forced to say he died with a beautiful courage. Before he was led out he asked me to do him one last favor—to send his favorite dog, some letters, and an open package which contained jewelry to Madame de Rohan. At the last moment I offered him a handkerchief to tie over his eyes. He refused it. 'You are French,' he said. 'At least grant me the honor of dying like one of my countrymen.' "

Letizia listened without moving. "Where are those things now—the dog—the letters?"

"At Vincennes, Madame. They are being held there until orders are received regarding them."

Letizia rose slowly. "Have them sent to my house tomorrow. I will see that they are properly delivered."

She moved slowly toward the door. Napoleon, suddenly aware that she was leaving, followed her with his eyes. When she had reached the door, he made a hurried step after her. His voice was a low murmur but vibrantly beseeching. "Maman!"

Letizia did not answer. Without looking back, without giving any evidence of having heard his call, she passed through the door and was gone.

Little by little Letizia's patience was being worn away. Constant prayers brought no peace. Burden upon burden seemed to be piling up upon her shoulders and leaving her helpless. A feeling of uselessness in the midst of grave dangers weakened her courage. No one seemed to need her any longer. No one would listen to her advice. Her standards, her convictions, her passionate beliefs seemed to be hers alone. Her children, all except Lucien, were as far from her in thought as if she had never borne them. Paulette, hardly out of dramatic mourning, had married Prince Borghese and gone to live—for a time, as she had frivolously expressed it—in a Roman palace. Caroline and Elisa could think of nothing but the gold table service they had recently bought and the time when they would be princesses. Joseph was absorbed with the importance of becoming his brother's heir. Listening to him talk, one would have thought the moment might arrive any day. Louis, though now a father, was showing himself indifferent to his wife and spending all his time taking cures and writing poetry. Jerome, back in Paris where his wife was not permitted to follow him, was apparently enjoying himself and rapidly forgetting the responsibility he had assumed by marriage. And Napoleon! He, most of all, had failed her. His attitude toward the death of the Duc d'Enghien had shown her a side of him which made her shudder. The crisis of her un-

happiness came with the storm that burst at the announcement of Lucien's civil marriage with Madame Jouberthou. His choice of a second wife had met with her approval; she had immediately been drawn to her and accepted her; but she was alone in this. The others turned their backs contemptuously upon Lucien. They said it was impossible to understand any member of the family not being willing to sacrifice family ties, love, personal inclinations in order that the clan might rise supreme.

She listened to Joseph's arguments with amazement. That he, the head of the family, the one who should have taken his father's place in leading, commanding, his younger brothers and sisters to lead an exemplary life should express such opinions almost shattered her belief in everything.

"If he had made her his mistress en titre Napoleon would not have objected. But to make her his wife—this widow of a broken-down stock-broker, with no fortune, no name, no reputation! It is incredibly stupid. How can he expect to be included among the claimants to the future sovereignty of France with children by such a woman! I sympathize entirely with Napoleon's attitude. He is building up a dynasty. And I must say his offer to Lucien was entirely fair."

"What was his offer?"

"He insists that Lucien shall not let this woman bear his name, that he shall not present her to his relatives, that he shall not publicly declare the marriage. If he will consent to do this his name will not be struck from the dynasty."

"What did Lucien say to that?"

Joseph squirmed with disgust. "You might know, Maman. He has always taken a sadistic pleasure in opposing Napoleon. He says he is now being rejected by us all after having served our interests and won honor for us. You would think he was the one who is going to be made emperor."

"But his wife?"

"He refuses to consider Napoleon's proposal—and by so doing has lost the chance of being made the King of Etruria. He must be hopelessly mad; there is no other name for it. Of course he grew oratorical and talked a lot about his wife, his son, his daughters, and himself all being one; that he wished all the women bearing the name of Bonaparte reflected as much credit on it as his wife did; that if we would not accept her as one of us he would resign from the Senate and leave France forever. There are moments when Lucien shows himself a veritable fool."

Letizia's eyes flashed fire. "There are more moments when he shows himself a brave, courageous, honorable man. I approve of what he has done. He has all my sympathy and love. If he leaves France I shall go with him."

Joseph opened wide his heavy eyes. "You, Maman! Napoleon would never forgive you if you left him for Lucien!"

"It is more a question of my forgiving him for acting as he has. Each day shows me more and more clearly that he cares no longer for the principles I live by. Nothing is important to him now except that which leads to power. He laughs at the sacredness of marriage vows. I have used every argument to convince him that he is acting criminally toward Jerome's wife. Why is she not allowed to enter France! Why must she seek refuge in England while Jerome, young and impressionable, is kept here and every temptation to make him annul his marriage put dazzlingly before him! His marriage was blessed by the church. I have been assured of that. It was performed by a priest in Baltimore. Her brother is here now seeking recognition of the marriage. I have sent word to him by Lucien that I approve of the marriage and am ready to welcome his sister in my home. But what impression does this make upon Napolione! None. He wishes Jerome to be another tool in his hands.

He must marry some one who will be valuable to this dream empire. His own happiness has nothing whatever to do with the matter. Everything must be sacrificed to glory. I can stand it no longer. I shall be ill if I remain here. If Lucien leaves, I shall go with him. I hope he will choose Rome. At least there I should have my brother and Paulette. Perhaps there I shall find some respite from this ceaseless unrest."

Joseph's habitual calm forsook him. He stared in amazement at his mother. "He will not let you go, Maman!"

"You think he would dare try to stop me by force! I do not fear him."

"Your leaving here at this time would be direfully misinterpreted. It is nothing less than forsaking him at a crucial moment. What would the world say if it were known that his mother left him at the moment when he is to be made emperor!"

"Nothing would please me more than that the world should know that this ambition is not shared by me. I should like every one to know that I have used every argument in my power to convince him that it will be a disastrous step."

"What good would that do, Maman?"

Letizia's voice broke with a sob. "None—I fear. He listens now to no one who does not approve of every thought and plan that emanates from his brain. Opposition increases his desires. For that reason I am better away from him. I am useless to him now. He has forgotten I exist."

Once this decision was reached, no arguments would move her. Her daughters called her stubborn, provincial, hopelessly Corsican. Why should she alone oppose Napoleon's being made emperor when the step was entirely legal! Hadn't he submitted the vote to both Chambers! Only three in the Senate had stood against him and every one knew they were personal enemies. The voice of the people had been overwhelmingly in favor of the imperial title with

hereditary succession. Conspiracies and plots had been definitely suppressed. The death of the Duc d'Enghien had done that. Soldiers and people were entirely with Napoleon. Why should his mother take this unique stand!

She hardly listened to them. Her heart counselled her. She could hear nothing else. Day by day she withdrew more within herself. Her children wondered over the change in her. Even when Napoleon came himself, having heard of her decision to go with Lucien to Rome, she received him as though he were a stranger.

"So you are going to forsake me, Signora Letizia," he began with a light, caustic note that did not hide the bitterness in his eyes.

"You have forsaken me."

"In not listening to your morbid prognostications!"

"In not listening to my wishes, my hopes, my fears. In not listening to others when their desires do not coincide with your dreams of power. You insist upon breaking up Jerome's happiness. Now you wish to ruin Lucien's life."

"I wish to carry them up with me. Do not let them blind you with sentiments which they do not feel. They are all more anxious to become princes than I emperor. It means more to them than it does to me. They, like I, were born in petty circumstances; but they did not force themselves upward unaided as I did. When I listen to them I can almost believe His Majesty, our father of blessed memory, must have bequeathed us crowns and realms."

"Not Lucien."

Napoleon turned away impatiently. "Lucien! Always Lucien! You have always loved him more than me—more than all the rest of us. Your actions confess it now. You are ready to forsake us all to go with him."

Letizia's lips softened. "If you were in his place, my son, it would be you that I would protect." Rare tears stood in

her eyes. "Remember that. And when you need me—when you are in trouble or danger—I shall be the first to come to your aid. I shall be waiting always—no matter how far away I may be. You will only have to send for me. I will come."

Napoleon saw the tears in her eyes. Bitterness fell from him. He seized her hands and covered them with kisses. "Don't go, Maman. I need you now."

A quick revival of hope swept over her. "Then you will forgive Lucien! You will not influence Jerome!"

He dropped her hands quickly and turned away. "Maman, can you not believe that everything I am doing is for the best! Why can you not trust me as others do! I look beyond mere sentiment. It is hard to meet with such opposition when such great interests are at stake. It looks as though I must isolate myself from every one and count only on myself."

Letizia bowed her head as if in submission; but it was not submission to her son's words, it was submission to the inevitable. She reached for her knitting. For a long time the only sound in the room was the rhythmic clack of needles.

"When we go to Rome," her voice was low and now completely under control, almost casual, "you must give Lucien a letter to the Holy Father. It is better that he should not know that you and your brother are not friends. That would make him see that I, as a mother, was as great a failure as my son was a success."

Napoleon nodded without speaking.

"And I should like one for myself. It has been my dream of many years to see the Pope, kiss his sacred ring, kneel before the altar of St. Peter's."

Napoleon's head lifted proudly, imperiously. "I shall write to him that I have sent you to him as my ambassador

to present my request that he come to Paris to crown me emperor of the French."

Letizia looked up quickly. Amazement gave place to bewilderment when she saw his face. Was he scoffing at her request! Surely his smile was not trivial. It had something calm and assured about it; even great dignity. The word sacrilege was on her lips, but she forced it back. He was going to speak again. The smile was even more significant than before.

"Charlemagne went to Rome to be crowned by the Pope. I wish the Pope to come to Paris to crown me."

She looked at him slowly, wearily, and then with an abounding pity. The words could only mean one thing—aberration. The ceaseless anxiety of these past days was telling on him, surely, slowly breaking him down. Though he pretended to scoff at dangers, she knew they were leaving their mark on him. The exaltation in his smile at that moment told her more than his words. Her hands stretched toward him. She would have liked to pull his head down on her bosom and comfort him as she had done when he was a child. He needed soothing, sweet influences to cool the heat of those devastating hallucinations. If she could only reach beyond these strange obsessions and find the real heart that was beating there—the heart she had given him! Suddenly, looking at him, a weird thought shot through her. She had carried him in her womb through the battles of the war of liberation. He had been formed while she was following her husband across high mountains, seeking refuge in rocky fastnesses, on the alert always for wild alarms. He had been nourished at her breast when her mind was still dwelling on defeat and her strongest emotions were those of hate for the conquerors. She had concentrated on the desire that he should avenge her and her people when he was grown to manhood. Her heart tightened with these memories. Her

blood had given life to the child within her and made him into this mould that now stood before her. She had poisoned him with her own emotions of that time. Horror took possession of her. She shuddered. Her head bowed. The knitting-needles slipped from her fingers and fell to the floor unnoticed. She felt crushed, mangled. The sin of her youth had arisen and now stood before her with annihilating force.

"If the Holy Father receives me," she murmured as if speaking only to herself, "I shall plead with him to intercede with the Madonna to lift this accursed dream from you, Nabulio. He will surely understand. He will counsel you as I have. And you will listen to him."

III

The view from Lucien's villa at Frascati appealed to Letizia more than any scene she had looked out upon since she had left Corsica. Indeed, it was much like Corsica to her. There was that same sunlight effect of powdered gold; there were dark cypresses; there were olive orchards covering green hillsides with silver patine; there were cool, shadowy ilex groves; there was the incessant murmur of running water; and far off, gentle and evanescent, were the vague blue Sabine Mountains. If it had not been for that distant city—a city built about a tabernacle whose dome was floating there before her and calling to her in some inexplicable way—she could have easily believed herself in her own country. There was something profoundly comforting in the quiet, the warmth, the caressing light. It promised so much, especially the peace for which she had been longing through many months.

But it was impossible to push disturbing thoughts completely into the background. The memory of the long voyage just completed was too vibrantly before her. Its incidents had brought back vividly everything that she was fleeing from. Through France it had not been so bad; but once across the frontier into Italy the incognito she had wished to maintain was no longer respected. At Turin, officials of the city met her carriage at the gates. They must welcome her as the mother of the future emperor of France. Their eloquent words made her shudder with a renewed rush of ominous suggestions. Was there no place in the world where she could escape those sinister words! She drew back in the carriage and gathered her shawl about her. But Saveria would not have it so. "Any one would think you were not proud of the Signor Nabulio, Signora!"

The words struck her with a sense of shame. She leaned forward, smiled, bowed, and was greeted with enthusiastic cheers. The demonstration was too spontaneous to be questioned; and for the first time a doubt of herself swept into her agitation. Was she the only one who did not wish this great honor to be conferred upon her son! Each day stressed this doubt. At Bologna a discharge of artillery had been accompanied by an escort of Polish cavalry. At Loretto, in the Papal States, the pontifical palace was placed at her disposal and a reception arranged for her that was quite equal to those extended to reigning families. When the Porto del Popolo was passed and she was actually at the end of her journey and in Rome, she threw herself into Paulette's arms with a sigh of relief. But even then there was no cessation of honors. Her brother, cardinal and ambassador, escorted her to his quarters in the Palazzo Orsini with a pomp that was nothing short of magnificence. Here the Cardinal Secretary of State was waiting to wecome her. After him came the members of the Sacred College. And within twenty-four hours the entire Roman nobility had signed their names in the book left in the portière's lodge.

"It is much worse than Paris," she complained to her brother. "At least there I had privacy. I lived my own life. I have not come here seeking honors which I do not deserve. I came for peace and retirement."

The cardinal smiled with satisfaction. "That will come later. You must first submit to the welcome of Rome."

"But I am only a simple Corsican. I wish to be nothing more."

Fesch shook his head. "You are now the mother of the Emperor of France."

Her eyes clouded. She drew her shawl about her with a shiver. "No—no! He is not yet that. I still pray God will preserve him from such a fate."

"What nonsense, Maman!" Paulette cried gaily. "You can't oppose the wishes of the whole world—especially if you insist upon wearing that rag of a shawl. It is a disgrace. I am shocked Caroline let you leave in such a garb. I have a new one for you—a perfect dream—the most ravishing amaranthine shade, embroidered all over with black palm branches. And a bonnet covered with plumes á la Lesbie! You will need a black veil for the Easter functions at St. Peter's. The Holy Father has ordered a special tribune erected for you. It is equal in size and decorations to those arranged for the Queen of Sardinia and the princes of Mecklenburg. Rome is filled with royalties—here for Holy Week. It is exactly like grand opera."

"But there is a slight complication over the functions," Fesch added with a frown. "I have protested to the Vatican that your place should not be behind that of any royalty. As they arrived before you they have been given first place. I have insisted that your tribune should at least be in line with theirs. Your position to-day is behind no one's."

Letizia listened with increasing disapproval. Was it possible that her brother, too, had fallen completely under this spell of extravagance and pomp? His words sounded as flippant as Paulette's. "I shall not go to St. Peter's as anything but what I am—a simple worshipper at the shrine of the great apostle. I wish no special tribune—or fancy shawls—or bonnets loaded with feathers. You both offend me with your levity. What has come over you!"

Arguments were of no avail. Both Fesch's and Paulette's words were wasted. She refuted all their suggestions as to her appearance in public with the answer that as it was Holy Week she wished to be left in peace to go about and offer prayers before the sacred, hallowed spots where martyrs of the church had given up their lives.

"After you are rested from your long voyage, Maman,

you will feel differently," Paulette stroked the soft, white hands affectionately. "You will find Rome most amusing. It is not Paris, but it has a certain picturesqueness that the French lack. I am so glad you did not arrive during the winter. You would have frozen to death. The Palazzo Borghese is as cold as a tomb. Even at this season, when I pose for my statue that Canova is doing, I must have a roaring fire. . . . When is the Pope going to receive you? I had an awful time postponing my audience of him. The Cardinal Secretary of State called the first day of my arrival and said His Holiness wished to receive me as soon as possible—that he was impatient to see if I was really as beautiful as reported. I had to make all sorts of excuses, fatigue, exhaustion, as I had no intention of being presented until my trousseau arrived from Paris. I felt it a sort of obligation to Napoleon to create a sensation. And I did. Uncle Fesch and Camillo's mother accompanied me. They said they had never seen any one received with such unique distinction. It is the custom to receive ladies of high rank in the garden. But I was received in the Pope's private apartments. He is quite adorable; so sweet and gentle. You cannot help loving him. I am sure I should have been a nun if I had known him sooner. He made me a present of a magnificent rosary and a superb cameo. I wonder what he will give you. . . . The recevimento afterward at the Borghese Palace was gorgeous—all the noblesse romaine, the diplomatic corps, and of course the whole of the Sacred College. Some one said I was playing havoc with the cardinals; that they all wanted to become my lovers. I hope Napoleon will be satisfied with the impression I have made. He is always telling me that I must help him and that the way to do it is to live up to my position. Consalvi is going to write him a personal letter. He showed me the draft of it yesterday. He has said such wonderful things about me—that I pos-

sess a charming grace, a delightful personality, and that I am endowed with such charm that one is ravished by such a combination of loveliness—both of mind and body. Then he added, for the benefit of my old mother-in-law, who thinks she was handed straight down from Julius Cæsar, that I have brought to the Borghese family a refulgence that could hardly have been imagined. . . . Yes, it is all most amusing; but it is not Paris. One feels in still water here. There is no élan. I wonder how soon I can return to Paris!"

"Is this not your husband's home!"

"Of course, Maman. But Camillo knew he was not marrying an old-fashioned wife when he married me. He is most amenable. He is very devoted to both me and Dermide; but he doesn't expect me to bury myself in Rome for the rest of my life. I told him the other day I would remain here until Napoleon was to be crowned. Of course nothing, absolutely nothing, would keep me from Paris at such a glorious moment. We can make the return voyage together."

"I shall not be there," Letizia replied coldly.

Escaping the surveillance of her brother and the array of flunkeys about the palace, she spent the days, accompanied only by Saveria, in visiting the hundreds of churches of the eternal city. Even on Easter morning, when the apotheosis of ecclesiastical drama was reached, she drove unheralded in a carriage she had found in the street to the Piazza di San Pietro. There, kneeling on the rough cobblestones, surrounded by hundreds of simple, devout peasants, she waited unknown until the Pope appeared on the balcony of the great basilica and blessed the multitude. The humbleness of her religious convictions made the gesture significant to her. She felt that in some way it might be accepted as a penance for the lack of devoutness in her children.

When she returned to her brother's palace nothing would persuade her to remain there. Lucien, arrived before her and already established in a villa at Frascati, offered her the refuge she sought.

"They are calling us exiles, Maman."

"Exiles by our own choice," she replied bitterly. "And we shall remain so until Napolione admits that he has treated you harshly."

With her new daughter-in-law, the children—especially the little Lolotte, daughter of her beloved Catherine—and the restful atmosphere of country life, the days passed peacefully. Lucien was settling down as though with every intention of passing the rest of his days in Italy. His pictures had arrived from Paris; already he had made a circle of friends; the Pope had received him with every courtesy; and so far as Letizia could see, he appeared happy. A new work—this time the life of Charlemagne—seemed to absorb all his time. But though they spoke little of the great events that were brewing in Paris, Letizia knew resentment was burning in him as in her.

Cardinal Fesch, arriving in an equipage that in point of splendor left no doubts of imperial relationship, and accompanied by Paulette, brought an announcement that abruptly ended the week of peaceful existence. His Holiness had announced that he would receive Her Imperial Highness, Madame Letizia Bonaparte, the following day.

"It is not a suitable title for you, Maman," Paulette complained. "I use that myself. You should have something much more resounding. I shall write to Napoleon myself. He should authorize you to be called Majesty or Imperial Mother or something like that."

"I have already written him," Fesch interrupted. "There has been considerable discussion here as to your proper title, sister. Of course it is out of the question to address

you in the same way as your daughters. Your position and rank must be made official."

Letizia folded her arms beneath the shawl Paulette had just brought her—the amaranthine one embroidered with black palm branches—and gazed at them both severely. "There will be time for such empty titles after my son has been crowned emperor."

"But in Rome they place great importance upon such details."

"Then, if they must call me something, tell them to call me Signora Madre. It is the highest honor that can be conferred upon any woman."

Paulette insisted that she return to Rome with her that evening. It was necessary to try on the black veil that must be worn at the audience at the Quirinal. Alterations might be necessary. "You must not disappoint them, Maman. You know they find you very handsome here—a typical Roman matron I heard a red hat describing you to my mother-in-law last night. He hadn't an idea I was listening. He said you were of medium build, with clear white skin, black hair that you wore curled in front, sparkling black eyes, a supple figure, small hands and feet, and regular features full of dignity. Would you recognize yourself from that description!"

The drive into Rome would have been more peaceful without Paulette's incessant chatter. Yet its gay lightness was not unwelcome. It at least scouted the pall of ominous thoughts. In the light-hearted presence of this daughter Letizia had always felt a reflection of her own youth. One could not possibly resist her childish effervescence. No wonder the cardinals found her something new in the sombreness of ecclesiastical surroundings. She was like sunlight piercing through heavy clouds. But there should be a limit to her extravagances—both of words and actions. At times,

From a photograph by Alinari.

Pauline Borghese.
From the statue by Canova.

Letizia felt she overstepped the boundaries that divided a wilful child from a wife and mother. Even that night, when Paulette was showing her over her apartments in the Palazzo Borghese, she had felt that maternal reproof was necessary. They had entered a vast chamber filled with the materials and tools of the famous sculptor Canova.

"We must have him do a statue of you, Maman. I shall try to think of a suitable pose. What do you say to the mother of the Gracchi! That would flatter Napoleon." She crossed to the far end of the room where white cloths were covering a statue. "This is what Canova is doing of me. It is only half finished. No one has seen it yet. But I must let you have a glimpse of it."

She lifted the cloths and stepped back, awaiting her mother's comment. Letizia looked at the statue through a long silence. The face was not yet begun; but the figure, extended on a chaise longue and nude except for the negligible folds of draperies that had fallen aside, was indisputably Paulette's.

"What do you think of it, Maman?"

Letizia's eyes flashed. Her frown became threatening. She turned upon Paulette with unrestrained fury. "Paoletta—how dared you pose like that!"

Paulette's laughter tinkled across the room. "Oh, you may be sure I have the room well heated."

Letizia gave her a resounding slap on both cheeks. "If you were not my daughter, I should call you a fallen woman."

With her hand resting firmly on her brother's arm, Paulette just behind her, Letizia mounted the imposing staircase of the Quirinal. The occasion was a grand gala, they told her; all the ceremonial of receiving royalty was employed. The Swiss Guard, in their black-and-yellow

striped uniforms, designed by Michael Angelo, grouped about the entrance to the palace, made a vivid splash of color against the ancient walls. A group of splendidly clad monsignori awaited her at the top of the steps and conducted her to the first antechamber, where the Guardia Nobile presented arms. The silence and dignity of the vast building were impressive. Fesch and Paulette were evidently enjoying the occasion to the fullest. Letizia was hardly aware of the ceremonious procedure. Her eyes were fixed and concentrated on something far beyond this outward show. She felt that the meeting between her and the father of Christendom was to be of momentous significance. She had not closed her eyes during the night. Words swam before her incessantly. And one desire. Would it be possible to tell this leader of the church, this follower of the great apostle, this representative of Christ on earth, all that was in her heart! Her profound, demanding desire was to bare her thoughts to him, confess her sorrows, her ominous forebodings, her fear of the future, and beseech him to help her—not herself so much, except that, in helping her, he would be helping those so dear to her. Could she speak to him of Napolione! Could she ask him to aid her in dissuading him from taking the disastrous step that she felt would bring ruin upon him and upon them all!

With lowered eyes she passed through room after room. Finally a closed door was reached. They stopped. She felt her brother gently removing her hand from his arm. She stood alone.

"I will await you here, sister. The Holy Father will receive you without us."

The doors were thrown open. She advanced into a small room. The doors were closed after her. She raised her eyes and saw a figure, clothed entirely in white, coming toward her. What a gentle, kind, benignant face! And sad! The

expression in the weary, calm eyes touched her subtly. There was infinite patience in the pale, wasted face. Surely this man had seen sorrow; had passed through the furnace of pain; had conquered. In one moment she knew that she could tell him everything and be sure of receiving comfort. That was his mission in life.

She moved forward slowly, knelt on the floor, placed her lips to the sacred ring upon the extended, frail hand, and bowed her head. A mood of quiet peace spread over her. She lost count of time. Her dread of the future seemed to slip from her forever. A deep certainty that all was well kept her on her knees. She felt that any movement that she might make would break this comforting emotion and cast her back into the world of darkness.

Words, low and sweet, finally reached her. "Rise, my daughter, and sit here beside me."

The frail hands helped her to her feet. She was led to a chair. The silence of the room was caressing. A shaft of sunlight streamed across the Aubusson carpet and reached her feet. The sound of softly plashing water came from the garden without. It was like the continuation of the sweet voice. Through the open window, framed between dark cypresses, extended a magnificent view of the city that culminated in a vague, gray dome.

Words again—still low and infinitely touching. "You have made this day one of great happiness for me. To welcome you to our eternal city brings a joy not often vouchsafed me. Now that you are with us you must feel that you are among those who love you deeply. How else could we feel toward such an illustrious mother!"

Letizia listened to the gentle words with sweeping wonder. She had come to pour out her heart in humility and sorrow. Instead, she was hearing words of praise. Her eyes sought those set deep in the sad face. They were filled with a gracious smile.

"There is little done—especially by our friends—that we are not cognizant of," the soft voice continued suavely. "We know what a faithful, devout daughter of the church you have always shown yourself to be. When I recently wrote to your son, I felt that I was in reality writing to you. The words were actually meant for you."

Letizia's lips trembled. "What words, Father?"

There was a slight pause. The gracious smile softened into an expression of concentration. "As I recall them they were something like this. 'It is due to you, to your zeal, your interest, your love and protection, that we have been able to re-establish in France the Catholic religion and to assure to it a state of peace and security which it now enjoys. It is to you—after God—that we should credit everything that has been done, ordered, and executed in France for the glory and good of our religion.' "

"You, Father, wrote that to my son!"

There was a gentle nod of assent. "A letter meant for you, my daughter—at least the sentiments expressed in it. We know that it was you who inspired your son to take the steps which ended in the Concordat. It was you, too, who have been the inspiration that has led him to such heights of glory. When we were first told that you were coming here, I wondered somewhat that you had the courage to leave him at such a momentous moment in his career. News has just reached us by special courier that the Senate has proclaimed your son Emperor of the French."

Letizia felt the walls crumbling about her. Her fears swept over her with uncontrollable trembling. The worst had happened. She covered her face with her hands.

"But surely this should make you happy, my daughter! Your actions suggest that the news is a sorrow to you rather than the joy it should be."

The joy it should be! What were these words she was

hearing! Could she be dreaming! She stared at the kind face, seeking some significance beneath the words. But she found there only calm benignity. Suddenly she clasped her hands in despair.

"But, Holy Father, this must not be. I have been tortured by this ambition of my son for months and months. I am constantly troubled by disturbing dreams. In the night I continually see visions of him—assassinated by fanatical republicans. I am certain the Republic has more friends than Napolione believes. He has been evilly counselled. I have tried to dissuade him from this step. I have known all along that it was wrong for him to dream of wearing a monarch's crown. He does not need it. He is more powerful without it. He belongs to the people. He should not separate himself from them in this way. A crown has never brought happiness to any one. It will not to him."

The kind old face bent nearer in attentive listening. The deep-set eyes were full of sympathy, full of understanding, full of love; and yet, in a very subtle way, they appeared to be smiling.

"You must not let such sinister thoughts dwell in your mind, my daughter. They are not worthy of you. The French Senate has stated that this change has been demanded by the interests of the people. You must think only now of the great opportunity before your son of bringing good to the world—peace, prosperity, brotherly love. Though he has risen to this pinnacle as a lord of war, he can remain there as an apostle of peace. That is what we are all hoping for. We have put our trust in him. You must trust him more than ever now."

"He listens to me no longer. Nothing is of importance to him now except that which leads to more and more power. Even his love for his brothers is no longer a binding tie. He insists that they sacrifice themselves, their families, their

most sacred ties for the sake of ambition. He is under the influence of some evil power."

"Then all the more reason that you should be with him. Who is better fitted to help him than you!"

"He listens to his wife and her followers."

"A wife—no matter how devoted—never takes the place of a mother."

"He has turned upon his brother because he would not deny his wife and has barred him from the line of inheritance. They parted in anger. Holy Father, anger is in my heart too. I have not been able to bring myself to forgive him for such a cruel step. That is my reason for leaving him. That is why I am here."

The frail hand lifted in a gesture of gentle rebuke. The sacred ring flashed in the shaft of sunlight and scintillated suggestively. "My daughter, your words pain me deeply. They do not come from the heart that I think of as yours. You must cast out such bitterness. From what you have just told me, I realize more fully than ever that your influence over your son must never be withdrawn. That would mean tragedy."

"My influence is dead."

"No—no. It is only that you, yourself, have let it weaken. More than ever your mission is clearly indicated. You must return to him. You must make him see the error of his ways. You must unite him once more with his brother. You must be the silver cord that binds them indissolubly. In your hands rests his future happiness."

The words reached Letizia as though they came from across great spaces. On and on they went—a sweet, musical sound filled with comforting balm.

"And you must let me counsel you to put aside forever those disturbing dreams of evil. Our faith is in God. He knows what is best. Surely He would not have showered all

these blessings on your son if it were not for some great purpose. We must believe in His wisdom and accept all He sends us. Our part is to try to understand and help in every way. You do see now that that is clearly your part. Up to this time you have stood beside your son. He is, in great part, what you have made him. Foolish dreams of disaster and bitterness in the heart must not separate you from him. You must be nearer him now than ever. He will need you in every step. Your place is beside him—as is ours."

"Yours, Holy Father!"

The smile was now more than gracious. Letizia felt that it had suddenly become refulgent.

"Ours—my daughter. We have put our trust in him. It is for that reason that we have consented to break a custom that has existed in the church for centuries—a custom which has never before been changed—and go to Paris to crown him emperor."

"—You must think only of the great opportunity before your son of bringing great good to the world—peace, prosperity, brotherly love. . . . Though he has risen to this pinnacle as a lord of war, he can remain there as an apostle of peace. . . . You must unite him once more with his brother. You must be the silver cord that binds them. . . . It is you who have been the inspiration that has led him to so much glory. . . . He is, in great part, what you have made him. . . . More than ever your mission is clearly indicated. . . . We have put our trust in him. It is for that reason we have consented to go to Paris and crown him emperor.—"

The words rang in Letizia's conscience through the days and weeks and months that followed. It was impossible for her to keep them from absorbing her to the exclusion of everything else. They were calming and yet somehow ex-

citing; disturbing and yet filled with comfort. Still, she kept them to herself. She repeated them to no one. When Paulette and Lucien urged her to recount the incidents of her audience she always answered that there was nothing that specially characterized it. Even to her brother, who she knew was watching and waiting for her confidence, she told nothing. She did not wish to share the words with any one. They were for her alone, sacred, intimate. She liked to think of them as having come to her from Christ's representative on earth. For that reason they should be treasured and hidden within her heart.

But beneath the comfort, the promise, the gratefulness which these emotions created, was an even more profound sensation of exaltation—one of thrilling pride that the father of Christendom should break through the custom of ages and travel out of his own realm to crown her son emperor. Charlemagne—of whom Lucien was writing so much these days—had gone to Rome to be crowned. The Pope was going to her son to crown him in his own capital. The announcement had left her dumfounded, bewildered, shocked into speechlessness. She never remembered how the audience had ended. Only when she realized that she was in the carriage with her brother and Paulette, did she seem to awaken from an amazing dream. Had all those sinister forebodings of the past months been only her imagination! Had she been so misled by her own emotions that she had forsaken the one who needed her most for one who had appealed to maternal instincts! Doubt of her own wisdom broke down her steadfast resolution. She was torn between a desire to return at once to Paris and to remain beside Lucien; and the former would have surely conquered if tragedy had not swept down, for the second time, upon Paulette. Death seemed to pursue this beautiful, gay, laughing creature with relentless hands. Dermide died after a

very short illness. Letizia folded the frivolous daughter to her bosom; forgot her disapproval of her extravagant tendencies; spent weeks with her among the peaceful, revivifying hills about Lucca; even encouraged her in the belief that the distractions of Paris were what she most needed to lighten her heart of its desperate burden.

Tidings from Paris came most often from Joseph. He wrote to his mother regularly—long letters filled with interesting details. After the empire had been constituted, the Senate had been transferred to St. Cloud, from which place Napoleon had been proclaimed emperor. "It was hardly a family reunion, Maman, without you and Lucien and Paulette and Uncle Fesch. Your absence was noted. Many commented upon it unfavorably. Some even went so far as to say you appreciated neither the great importance of the step that was being taken nor the noble character of your son. Napoleon feels your absence deeply, though he makes no comment. I know, though, what he is thinking—that your love for Lucien is greater than for him or any of the rest of us. Josephine said that he told her you had rushed to Toulon so as to be the first to greet him after his victory there; but that now—you had forsaken him. . . . After the magnificent session of the Senate, we all remained with the new emperor in the palace. When we were going into dinner, Duroc—who is now grand marshal of the palace—appeared and announced the new titles we were to bear. I am Prince Joseph and Grand Elector of the Empire. Julie, as my wife, also is titled. She is now Princess Joseph. Louis has been made constable and he and his wife are prince and princess. It would have been a delightful evening if Caroline and Elisa had not behaved so outrageously. They apparently could not accept the fact that Josephine was now to be called Empress; and that Hortense and my beloved Julie were to be addressed as Royal Highness while they re-

mained simple Madame Murat and Madame Bacciochi. You would have been distressed at their deportment. If you had been here I don't believe they would have dared act so disgracefully—especially Caroline. When Napoleon leaned across the table and spoke to Hortense as Princess Louis, Caroline burst into tears. Elisa had enough self-control to remain silent, but her attitude toward every one was insulting. After dinner Elisa made no attempt to control herself and accused Napoleon before us all of every possible crime. She demanded to know why he had condemned her and her sister to obscurity, to public contempt, while he covered strangers—what else were the wives of his brothers!—with every honor and dignity. Of course Napoleon was furious with her; but that had no effect upon her. She continued to hurl reproaches upon him, weeping hysterically all the time. Finally, seeing that she was gaining nothing, she threw herself on the floor in a dead faint. She was unconscious so long that we all feared she was dead. Even Napoleon was so frightened that he knelt beside her and wept and told her that if she would only open her eyes he would give her anything she asked of him. Her ruse—if it was one—succeeded. The next day the *Moniteur* published on the first page the announcement that the title of imperial highness had been conferred upon all princes and princesses and that the sisters of the emperor would bear the same title. . . . As you already know, Lucien and Jerome are not included in the imperial family because of their unfortunate marriages. My children and Louis' are the legal successors to the imperial state. . . . The organization of the court is being done on a magnificent scale. You will be glad to know that Talleyrand has not been given one of the offices of grand dignitary. He remains Minister for Foreign Affairs—though grand chamberlain of the court. Fouché, alas! continues as Minister of Police.

Murat has been made Marshal of France. Poor old Bacciochi is still colonel, but I believe Napoleon will soon have him appointed Senator—to appease Elisa. Uncle Fesch is now Grand Almoner. Beyond these appointments there is an endless number of prefects of the palace, court ladies, and minor functionaries. The whole affair is absolutely dazzling. They say it is going to be much more magnificent than the court of Louis XIV. You must return soon. You will be astounded by it all—but it will amuse you."

Astounded—yes. Amused—no. Letizia knew that she could never be happy in such surroundings. Magnificence held no allure for her; on the contrary, the thought of being in such a milieu was oppressive to her. It was not her place. It never would be. In a desire to escape farther and farther from it, her thoughts turned to Corsica. Why not go back there and live quietly in the old house that she had spent so much time in rebuilding! She would take only Saveria with her. They could live simply, happily, far from the sound of so much blatant glory. And when the others wished to see her, needed her, they could come there. This had once been her dream. It returned to her now with enticing suggestions.

Those about her laughed at the idea; even Lucien. "Corsica is a thing of the past, Maman; for you as much as the rest of us."

"It will never be that. It is my home. It is permanent. These other places will some day pass out of our lives. Ajaccio will remain."

Paulette scoffed. "You promised to forget all these mauvais présages. You said Napoleon would never be made emperor. Look at him now. And nothing has happened to him. They say he is even growing fat with his new title."

"He is not yet crowned," Letizia maintained firmly.

"The date has been set, sister," Fesch stated. "I received

a letter from him a few days ago. The ceremony is to take place in Notre Dame in December. He writes that he wishes you and Paulette and me to be there."

"And Lucien?"

The cardinal's countenance fell. "He did not mention him."

"Then write him—for it is with you alone that he corresponds. I have not received a letter from him since I left Paris. Tell him that I will never return to Paris without Lucien."

Fesch draped his voluminous red robes about him. "I spent several hours at the Quirinal yesterday." He spoke suavely as though he had not heard the last words. "Already great preparations are being made for the journey of the Holy Father to Paris. He asked me when you intended to leave."

The subject was carefully chosen to impress Letizia. Memories of the significant audience and the counsel given her rose before her saliently.

"He expects you to be there," Fesch continued quietly. "It would be a tragic mistake for you to maintain this exile. Do you not realize you can do more for Lucien there than here! It will be a moment to plead with the emperor."

"Plead with my son to do what is only just!"

"Already he has shown great clemency to his enemies. He has pardoned a number of those implicated in the conspiracies against his life. He is beginning his reign with mercy. It is for you to show him that he must forgive and forget all those futile differences that exist between him and Lucien. I beseech you to let me write him that you will come to the coronation."

Letizia rose in order to escape such arguments. She listened to her brother more than to any one else; but she could not yet bring herself to accept his advice in this mat-

ter. "If Napolione writes to me himself and asks me to come—then will be the time for me to make a decision."

Fesch's insistence never ceased. Up to the last day, when he left in the magnificent train which accompanied the Pope, he did not stop urging her. Finally they parted, not in anger, but in deep sorrow; he especially that he had found his sister so stubborn. "There is still time," were his last words. But Letizia, thinking of Lucien, had remained adamant. Then Paulette departed. She was left alone with the son who had been cast out of the family circle.

At last a letter came from Napoleon. Reading it, all inhibitions fell from her. In her heart she knew this was what she had been waiting for. A thrill was once more rushing through her. An excitement much like that which had possessed her when she stood on the hills above Toulon and looked down upon the lurid lights of the battle her son was directing, took hold of her. Her little Nabulio—her son of battle—emperor of France! She experienced a blinding rush of pride. Then bitter memories swept back and dulled the moment of exultation.

"He asks me to come, Lucien." Her eyes dwelt with satisfaction upon the heavy document with its dangling seals. "It sounds much more like a command. He addresses me as Madame. But he signs himself"—here her eyes softened—"your very affectionate son." Her head lifted. "Va bene—I shall go. But"—her lips tightened into a severe line—"I shall not arrive until this benedetta coronation has taken place. My presence there would mean that I approve of this step. My absence will show that I do not favor it."

Surrounded by her children—all of them except Napoleon and Lucien and Jerome—Letizia listened for hours to their ceaseless chatter. She rarely interrupted them; and she rarely smiled at their frivolous recountal of great events.

But none of their comments escaped her; nor the discontented expressions on their faces. Beneath gay words and outbursts of laughter, she sensed an undercurrent of restlessness—almost unhappiness. Their rich garments, their sumptuous carriages waiting before the door, their flunkies and chasseurs and attendants, their magnificent palaces seemed to absorb them with preoccupations that made for everything but contentment. She was constantly struck by the difference in them now and during those far-away days in Corsica. Then their eyes had been clear and bright and happy; even during the struggles of Marseilles their expressions had been care-free and cheerful; now each one of them appeared exhausted, nervous, discontented. Evidently there was such a thing as too much glory.

Joseph and Louis had met her early that morning at the gates of Paris and driven her to this house in the Rue St. Dominique which she had promised Lucien—against her wishes—she would occupy. She had remembered it as being huge and impressive. Now that she was in it she found it depressing in its magnificence. It was so entirely what she did not like. And to add to its gloom, the scene without showed only gray skies and dreary mists.

"At least it is appropriate, Maman," Joseph had replied to her complaints. "You will grow to like it. I should suggest you buy it from Lucien. He wrote me the other day he only wanted six hundred thousand francs for it. It is a bargain at that price."

"I have no need for such a sumptuous dwelling. But if it would help Lucien to sell it, I will buy it of him."

"I heard Napoleon say he was going to establish you in a part of the Trianon," Elisa said.

Letizia frowned. "That house of the murdered queen! Never! I shall live simply as I always have."

"He will not consent to that. Your position—as ours—

demands certain obligations. You must not forget you are now the mother of the emperor of France. We are all surrounded by all sorts of pomp and ceremony."

"I haven't noticed that you dislike it, Elisa," Caroline smiled tauntingly.

"Why should I! Isn't it our right! Aren't we now princesses of France! What I do complain of, though, is that Napoleon should insist that we treat him as the rabble does —call him Sire, kiss his hand, courtesy to him."

"It is good policy to pretend to," Caroline retorted.

"And it has its amusing side," Louis drawled. "Some people are not yet accustomed to the new title. I heard a general the other day call him Citizen, General, First Consul—everything he ever was—before he finally reached Sire."

"Why shouldn't we do everything to please him!" Paulette drawled languidly. "Hasn't he done everything for us! It is little enough—except kissing the old woman's hand. That is going a bit too far. And what do you suppose he wants to do for Joseph, Maman! Make him king of Italy."

Joseph frowned scornfully. "Provided I renounce my rights of succession to the empire. I have refused the honor. Louis can have it—if he wants it."

Louis' smile was disdainful. "Thanks—I have refused it also. I am not strong enough to be bothered. Besides, I don't like Milan. Why don't you persuade him to give it to Murat, Caroline?"

"Just as we have bought the palace of Madame de Pompadour, the Elysées, and got settled there! Never! Nothing would persuade me to leave Paris now. It is too exciting here. Perhaps later——"

"You don't know what you missed by not being here for the coronation, Maman," Paulette smoothed out the folds of her rose-colored satin draperies bordered with white

swan's down and settled comfortably on the sofa. "There was never anything quite so splendid—and so much fun. Notre Dame was more like a ballroom than a church. Isabey made us rehearse the ceremony for days. He even prepared a lot of dolls and placed them on a plan so that each one of us should know where we were to stand and what we were to do. You would have died laughing at Napoleon. He spent the whole time at rehearsals learning how to place the crown on Josephine's head. She was so afraid he would muss her hair. We were all furious when he told us we had to carry her train. Imagine such ignominy! And it weighed tons—heavy velvet embroidered all over and lined with ermine. I couldn't sleep for a whole night planning to get even with him. And I almost succeeded. Elisa and Caroline and I arranged that when we reached the steps of the altar we would drop the train without warning Josephine. When she started up the steps and had to pull all that weight after her she almost toppled over. Wouldn't it have been delightful if she had! And you should have seen Napoleon in all his gold-embroidered white satin—a sort of Roman toga—and carrying a sceptre which he hit Uncle Fesch in the back with whenever he wanted to attract his attention. I think he might have told us he was going to crown himself. They say no one but he and the Pope knew of the plan beforehand. I must say I was rather sorry for the Holy Father. He was not much in the picture. But he did have spunk enough to make Napoleon marry the old woman the night before; said he would not go to Notre Dame if they had not been united by the church. Uncle Fesch did it. He will tell you all about it. We were not present as it was supposed to be a secret. You must order a royal mantle at once—velvet embroidered with bees. That is to be our emblem now. I believe it is supposed to suggest ceaseless activity. And an eagle volant is to be our seal. You will be amazed at the

change in Napoleon. He doesn't look like himself since the coronation. Much better looking—really handsome. He has filled out tremendously. David said he looked exactly like Augustus. I admit I was thrilled at his appearance. You will be prouder of him than ever. What was it he said to you, Joseph, after he had taken his seat on the daïs and the Pope was anointing him?"

Joseph's expression softened as he repeated the words: " 'If only our Father could see us now.' "

Letizia leaned forward quickly. "He said that!"

Joseph nodded gravely.

"Then—nothing else matters." She raised a handkerchief to her eyes and wiped away tears. "I forgive him everything." She rose impatiently. "When is he coming to see me?"

"Your audience is arranged for this afternoon, Maman."

"My audience! Is he not coming to me! Must I go to him!"

Joseph made a deprecating gesture. "You forget, Maman, he is emperor of France now."

Suddenly the words took on a new significance to Letizia. She stood in the centre of the room, silent, thoughtful, very still. Then she lifted her head proudly. Her eyes were now glowing with a light that was fairly thrilling.

The drive to the Tuileries was made in Joseph's splendid carriage. The crowds about the gates and in the courts were as great as the day of the grand review. But there was a striking change. Uniforms were much more splendid. The simplicity and care-free manners of the Consulate were gone forever. Everywhere were now great form and ceremony. Uniforms were much more splendid. Huissiers spoke in lowered voices. The magnificence of Bourbon days was surpassed. A vivid splash of color—uniforms of yellow and black stripes—made Letizia stop and place her hand on Joseph's arm.

"I saw those in Rome at the Quirinal. Why are they here?"

"The Holy Father is lodged here now. Those are his guards," Joseph explained.

Letizia drew in her breath. The Supreme Pontiff a guest in her son's palace! She clung more tightly to Joseph's arm. For almost the first time in her life her steps were unsteady. A wave of unreality swept over her. The unbelievable had taken place.

They stopped before the salon of the emperor. Guards bowed obsequiously before them. Joseph drew back. "I will await you here, Maman—at least until you have spoken to him alone. It is his command."

The door was thrown open. Letizia entered. It took several moments of concentration to bring herself back to actual surroundings. Then her glance travelled slowly across the room. There he was, seated at a desk, bent forward, writing—her little Nabulio, her son of battle, emperor of France. The span of years swam about her. Infinitely insignificant incidents ranged themselves before her; a day at Milelli under the ancient oak; a little naked boy swimming in an emerald green sea; a pair of ridiculously small trousers of coarse brown cloth that needed patching; a lunch basket filled with bread and cheese to be carried to school; a prayer to be said at night that the Zio Luciano had composed the words of which had a way of getting hopelessly tangled; a wooden sword and a crude drum made of stretched goat skin.

Slowly the past faded. The present returned. Her glance became fixed. How changed he was! Still pale, as he had always been; but now there was something luminous, something extraordinarily brilliant and effulgent in his pallor—something beautiful. His eyes seemed filled with flame. Who was it they said he was like—Augustus! But the first

emperor of Rome had not smiled like that. No one could put such beauty into a smile but her son.

She stood quite still while he rose and came toward her. Their eyes met. Their heads lifted as if in unison. A blazing current of pride seemed to make them both suddenly taller, more impressive, more impregnable, more indomitable. The moment was unmistakably a test of wills.

Napoleon made the first gesture. With obviously assumed ease he held out his left hand in expectation of the recently acquired royal salutation. Letizia stared at the extended hand, drew herself up to her full height, then, flushing deeply, thrust the hand from her.

Napoleon scowled. "Am I not your emperor!"

Letizia's expression was a perfect reproduction of his glowering frown. "Am I not your mother! Are you not, before everything else, my son!"

The smile was back again upon Napoleon's face. He grasped her hands, raised them to his lips, kissed them. "Signora Letizia Bonaparte—Imperial Highness—mother of the emperor of France."

Her arms closed about him. She strained him to her. Their tears mingled.

"Maman!"

"Nabulio!"

Still in her tight embrace, he sought her eyes. "Why did you not come before? It was the first time you ever failed me."

She avoided his penetrating glance. Releasing her hold, she turned away. What could she answer at this moment! "You know. It was a moment when we should all have been united. It was a time when futile anger should have been forgotten. We should all stand—and fall—together." She waited for an answer, received none, felt the joy of the moment vanish. She continued, in a suddenly dulled voice: "They tell me your coronation was magnificent."

His shoulders lifted. "A day on the battle-field would have pleased me more."

She nodded, reflective, understanding. "Naturalmente. That is your place. That is what I bore you for."

Then he laughed, gaily, playfully, affectionately, happily. "And you thought by your absence to let the world know that you did not approve of my being made emperor! You can't deny it. I know you too well to be deceived. But I have found a way to win a victory—even over you. You are going down in history as having approved of every step I took. I have ordered David to make your portrait the dominating one in his painting of the coronation."

BOOK V

I

LETIZIA sat in a deep armchair, one of those new shapes that were becoming so popular and were already known by the name of Empire. It was covered with green velvet and matched the fringed cloth that covered the table beside it. Both had been used in the portrait Gérard had painted of her. Indeed, her pose was much the same; only now she was not wearing the heavily embroidered white satin robe, nor the velvet mantle, nor the diadem with its star-incrusted drapery. Instead, she was clothed simply in black, with a warm woollen scarf about her shoulders. And her hands, in place of resting idly on her knees, were moving with amazing rapidity as she knitted a small jacket. There was always so much knitting to be done; so much, in fact, that she sometimes felt she had no right to take the time from it for an hour or two of reversi. If it were not something for the children—though of course they now scorned such things—it was for their children. So many grandchildren! Not much danger of the Bonaparte clan ever dying out! At the moment the substantially warm little jacket was for Lucien's new baby—a girl that had been honored, according to the grandmother, much more than any other member of the family. Lucien had written her that the Holy Father had consented to be the child's godfather and had given her the name of his own sister. Could any child begin life under more blessed auspices! Back of her, on the wall, hung a superb Gobelins tapestry depicting "The Return of the Hero." Beside her, on a pedestal, stood the bust of Carrara marble, a copy made from Canova's plaster cast of her son of battle, sent to her by Her Serene Highness, Elisa, Prin-

cess of Lucca and Piombino. On the spacious Buhl desk were two miniatures; a charming one of Pauline, Princess of Guastala; another one of Her Majesty, Caroline, Queen of Naples. At the far end of the room hung three portraits; one of the King of Spain, one of the King of Holland, one of the King of Westphalia. On the centre-table was a small plaster cast—also the work of Canova—representing a woman whose face and bearing suggested the power and dignity usually attributed to a Roman matron. The likeness was unmistakable; though gossip had it that the sculptor called his work Agrippina. "What—you have dared depict the mother of the emperor as the mother of Nero!" "Not as the mother of Nero," Canova had replied. "As the daughter of Germanicus." Every available space on the walls was crowded with prints and engravings—all of them battle scenes. Their titles made a cycle of history. Toulon, Arcola, Rivoli, Marengo, Austerlitz, Jena, Eylau, Friedland. A colored print, hung lower than the others, appeared to have the place of preference. It showed a magnificent tent erected on a raft that floated in the middle of a river. Before this tent stood two men, one in the uniform of a French general, the other in the splendid robes of a Russian monarch. The two men were clasping hands while, on both shores, their respective armies were raising their guns in joyous gestures of proclaimed peace. Gusts of rain and wind against the windows made the room appear doubly comfortable and warm—even though the chimney did smoke at times. And to realize that this was not Corsica one had only to glance out at the misty, dripping landscape, the long avenues of pleached limes, the slowly flowing river. Nowhere except in northern France could one find such a maledetto climate.

"If Your Imperial Highness will be so good as to permit me to read the list of requests received during the past few days——"

Letizia's glance lifted from the needles and travelled to the letters which the Duke Decazes was opening. "Judging from the number you have there, it would seem they believe my funds unlimited."

The Duke smiled. "As Protectress of the Hospital Sisters and the Sisters of Charity throughout the whole extent of the Empire"—the words rolled sonorously from his carefully chiselled lips—"they naturally think Your Imperial Highness is in a position to meet every request." He cleared his throat and rustled the papers. "This week's demands are slightly less than usual."

"Let me hear them."

"The administrators of the hospital of Tournon have the honor to request that Your Imperial Highness will solicit from the government three thousand francs for repairing the buildings of the hospital."

Letizia nodded. "Make a note of that and see if it is not possible to have the repairs made for less. Three thousand francs would feed several soldiers' families for months."

"The superior of the Daughters of Charity of Saint Pont request that Your Imperial Highness will secure for this community a payment of four hundred francs a year for the support of an almoner."

"Write them they can have my almoner when they need one. He has little enough to do here."

"The superior of the Sisters of the Presentation request the authorization to buy a new house and to be permitted to change their habit from blue to black."

"A wholly unnecessary expense. Why change the color of their habit when thousands of soldiers' widows are in need of clothes!"

"Monsieur Gobier, worker in passementerie, requests a recommendation for a lady who wishes to open a tobacco-shop."

"Send it to him. At least that costs nothing."

"The authorities of Bagnères request two sisters of charity."

"See that they are sent."

"The Minister of Finance advises that he has not been able to find a house large enough to accommodate the Sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul."

"Write him again and urge the necessity of finding something."

"The Minister of the Interior states that the first vacant place in the home for deaf-mutes will be given to Mademoiselle de Villette. The Minister adds that he has carried out the orders of Your Imperial Highness regarding the Ursuline Sisters of Dole."

"Meno male." Letizia put down her knitting and extended her hand to the desk which was comfortably within reach. Its labelled drawers gave evidence of constant use—more than it had ever seen when in the possession of its original owner of the time of Louis XIV. The labels were an accurate tabulation of the present varied addresses of the Bonaparte family: Paris, Lyons, Rome, Mortfontaines, Aix, Madrid, Florence, Cassel, Naples. "Here are several other matters to be attended to." She read from a list scrawled upon a sheet of paper. "A widow named Melanie, mother of two sons, one killed at Jena, the other a prisoner of war, begs for assistance. Send her five hundred francs. Madame la Comtesse de Sanlys, whose husband died an emigré in England, is destitute. If we have no funds available for such a case—and I doubt if the government would approve—draw two hundred francs from my own exchequer and send them to her. Murat writes that he wishes me to establish a charitable institution in his kingdom. We must present his request at once. And there is the Hôtel Dieu at Château Thierry."

Decazes held up protesting hands. "Your Imperial Highness—are we not undertaking too much!"

"There should be no end to good works." Her eyes shifted to the engravings on the walls. "If it had only been possible for all those victories to have been accomplished by peace instead of war we should not have all these demands. I can never forget the lives they cost—the mothers' tears—my own endless days of anxiety. Each time he goes away I fear it is the last time I shall ever see him. My children say I am foolish—that his star will always preserve him from harm. But why should the blessed Madonna perform a miracle just to save my son; other mothers pray as devoutly as I do—and their sons never return. This work is as little as I can do in reparation for these holocausts. Write to the government to-day, Monsieur le Duc, and tell them we need at least a million francs more. If I do not answer these requests they will continue to call me stingy. They think, because I am the mother of the emperor, that I should throw money through the windows. I do not because I know its value. Poverty taught me that. I give freely when I am sure it is needed. But I do not give with my eyes shut." She smiled slowly. "Even the emperor has praised my zeal and business ability. He said I should be at the head of my own government."

"Surely no one can call you stingy who knows what you are doing! I have heard you called the sainted mother. Madame Mère is a venerated title on the lips of all those who come to you for aid."

Letizia's eyes brightened; then her lips curved with fleeting humor. "Provided they know what the title means. Only last week a man took refuge here from a storm. When he asked who lived in this house they told him Madame Mère. He said Madame Mère meant nothing to him. Any mother might be called that. Then he asked whose mother

I was." She picked up her knitting. "I asked my son to let me do this work. Duroc complains that I have made it as important as a ministry. Why shouldn't I! It is much more needed than his occupation—throwing away millions on foolish show, uniforms, court functions, balls, banquets. I spend the sums they dole out to me on those who have given their children, their lives, for the glory of France. When the ministers say my demands are exorbitant I tell them their glory is built upon the happiness and contentment of the people. Take that away and they will all fall—all of them." She sighed deeply. "But it is so difficult to make them understand. When I try to make economies, my son chides me for not living in grander style. He forced this useless, expensive household upon me. What need have I for all these people —an almoner, two chaplains, a physician and two assistants, six ladies in waiting, a reader, a first chamberlain and two assistants, a master of stables, an intendant, a notary, a secretary. Almost all of them are useless. They bore themselves here. Oftentimes they bore me—especially when I have to pay them huge sums that I could use in other ways. Yet, when I speak to His Majesty, he smiles and says: 'Signora Letizia, it is suitable that you should spend at least a million a year.' And I reply: 'Va bene. If you wish me to spend a million you must give me two.' "

Decazes' eyes opened wide. "And did His Majesty accede to your request?"

Letizia frowned. "He made me a present of six hundred thousand francs and a dozen pieces of Gobelins tapestries." She waved her hand contemptuously at the sumptuous hangings that decorated the room. "As if I wanted such things! I have half a mind to take Pauline's advice and sell them. But it is so difficult now to find safe investments. My brother advises me to wait until the emperor returns from this last war against Austria. He and I are the only two

S. A. I. Madame Mère.
From the painting by Gérard.

who look to the future. But a time will surely come when my children will be glad enough that I have saved for them."

Decazes' laughter was deprecating. "With all your sons now kings!"

"Not Lucien."

Decazes moved restlessly. He wished if possible to avoid a long discussion of the subject that was always so near Letizia's heart, so constantly on her lips. "But with them all kings and princesses, no evil can possibly befall them."

"Evil has befallen other kings and princesses—and not so many years ago."

As if recalled to it by her words, her glance rested on the bust near her chair. It dominated the room as it did her thoughts, her actions, her life. Napolione. But for him she would never have been in this château. It was one of the first gifts he had made her when she returned from Rome. He had offered her other places, palaces in Paris, the Trianon of the beheaded queen, all of which she had refused. They were much too splendid for her tastes. Besides, she had bought Lucien's hotel in the Rue St. Dominique. That was enough, too much, and would be used only when it was necessary for her to be in Paris. Then where did she wish to live! Her thoughts turned to the country; some place away from all these fêtes and endless streams of fawning courtiers; some simple place where she and Saveria— Napoleon had turned away impatiently and a few days later sent her a letter. It was in her desk now—along with that voluminous correspondence she carried on with each member of the family. "Madame—I have purchased for you the Château of Pont. Send your intendant there to look it over and take possession. It is my intention to grant sixty thousand francs to furnish it. You thus become owner of one of the most charming estates in France. I hope you will see

in what I have done a new proof of my desire to please you. Your very affectionate son, Napoleon." A new proof of his desire to please her! The words touched her in spite of the gift being so contrary to her wishes. There were other letters from him tucked away in a special drawer, each signed "your affectionate son," and yet all of them as unconsciously dominating as that bust beside her. One especially. She knew the words by heart. Were they not a command he had thought it necessary to send her even from a distant battle-field! It was dated at Finskenstein. "I approve heartily of your going to your country place; but, as long as you are in Paris, the proper thing for you to do is to dine every Sunday with the Empress—a family dinner. My family is a political one. When I am absent the Empress is always the head of it. Moreover, this is an honor which I extend to the members of my family. This will not prevent me, when I am in Paris and whenever my occupations permit, from going to your house to dine." Always thoughts of that woman! Would her sinister power endure forever! Would nothing ever curb her influence! Not satisfied with marrying her daughter to the Emperor's brother, having her son adopted and made viceroy of Italy, she had abetted her husband in persuading Jerome, who, young, spoiled, lighthearted, was only too ready, through promises of great position, to admit that his early marriage in America was a mistake. Here sharp pain shot through Letizia's thoughts. How she had fought for her convictions! Through many months she had resisted every argument. At last one question had won her consent. Did she want Jerome to be an outcast like Lucien? In the end, commanded by Napoleon—and this in spite of the fact that the Holy Father had refused to annul the alliance—she had signed a document which stated that Jerome's marriage, without her consent, was illegal; and, against all her most deeply rooted princi-

ples, she had seen him married to Catherine of Wurtemburg, made King of Westphalia, and now living a resplendent and apparently happy life. But that other wife and son, deserted, cast away! The empty eyes of the marble bust met hers inscrutably. A proof of his desire to please her! Far from it. But—had he not done great things for her sons! Had he not put Joseph on the throne of Naples and then made him King of Spain! Was not Louis King of Holland! Was not her brother cardinal and Grand Almoner of the Empire! Yes, yes; but had all these honors made for happiness! Did not the contentment of home life, the sacredness of the hearth, disappear in the glamour of these thrones he had created! Joseph had willingly forsaken Julie and his children to reign over foreign people. That was Julie's fault; court life did not appeal to her simple tastes. Well—then Louis. Povero Luigi—struggling against ill health—almost paralyzed and having to write his poems now with his left hand—and trying to make those dull Dutch love him as their king while his wife forsook him for more amusing capitals than The Hague. No—there was little happiness in all this worldly glory. Lucien had been right to refuse a throne when it meant renouncing his wife and children. Ah, Lucien again! Would she never be convinced that he was not worthy the name of Bonaparte, that he had never done anything for the honor of the family! The honor of the family! Perhaps he had done more for it than any other.

Letizia's eyes met the stony ones of the marble bust without wavering; and in them burned a steady fire of resistance. Others might prostrate themselves before this overwhelming force. She never would. She would still struggle to maintain those convictions which had carried her safely through more than half a century.

Decazes coughed in an attempt to recall wandering attention.

Letizia nodded. "That will be all for to-day, Monsieur le Duc." She laid her knitting aside. Then her face brightened. "At least all the correspondence. If you have time we might have a little game of reversi. I shall not have a moment for it to-morrow. Jerome is coming to give me all the news of Wagram and Schönbrunn. We might ask Laure Junot to join us—or the Duchess d'Abrantes, as they call her now. She is on duty here as my lady in waiting." She reached in a drawer of the desk for a pack of much-thumbed cards. Shuffling them efficiently, she smiled. "Paoli used to say, when I beat him—and I always did—that I had reversi in the blood. I wonder if he meant my life was to be like this game—to win one must lose everything."

Jerome was not inclined to enter into satisfactory descriptions of Wagram and Schönbrunn. They now belonged to the past. More important matters were on hand. As soon as he had got fat, rosy, amiable Catherine seated at the piano with the Duchess d'Abrantes, who was singing some Corsican folk-songs of her childhood to which Saveria, peeping in from the corridor, was listening with enthralled countenance, he persuaded his mother to retire with him to what he playfully called her ministry. While she sat in the armchair knitting, he paced up and down the floor with a feeble attempt to reproduce his famous brother's gesture.

"Napoleon has returned—before any one expected him."

"He is in Paris!"

"No. He stopped at Fontainebleau. He is still there. I saw him yesterday." Jerome stood before his mother with a broad smile. "They say all things come to him who waits. Maman—you are going to have your heart's desire at last."

Letizia's needles halted. "You mean Napolione and Lucien are to be reunited!"

"Oh, that—no! I doubt if that will ever happen. You

might as well give that up forever. I was speaking of Josephine. Napoleon has finally decided to divorce her. As soon as I arrived in Paris and heard he was at Fontainebleau, I hurried out there to see him. It seems no one had expected his return from Austria so soon. There was no one there to meet him. Cambacérés and Josephine were the first to get there. She hurried immediately from St. Cloud. Sly old girl! Even in her haste she had not forgotten to take a dazzling trousseau with her. You should have seen her at dinner with us—in a white satin polonaise and a head-dress of corn flowers and silver thorns. I must admit, for forty-six, she keeps up extraordinarily well. But all that is not going to help her now. Napoleon has made up his mind this time. He even had the doors between their rooms walled up so she could not get to him. I spent the evening with him alone. He talked for hours. He told me all about the scene he had had with Josephine the night before. She fainted when he told her he was going to divorce her. He insists that he still loves her from the depths of his heart, but that tears and scenes will affect him no longer. He got some sort of promise out of her—a dramatic one, of course—in which she said she would descend from the throne as she had mounted it—at his wish. He is going to do famously by her; give her palaces, châteaux, huge revenues; and let her retain the title of first rank after reigning empress. But, Maman—aren't you listening! Aren't you pleased!"

Letizia's face was hardly suggestive of joy; its expression was one of very grave doubts. "He cannot escape her now. There was a time—when he came back from Egypt. It is too late now."

"But I assure you his mind is made up. He talks of nothing but the interests of France and his dynasty demanding divorce."

Letizia's hands were strangely still. Clasped in her lap,

they were white and motionless. For thirteen years she had longed for the news she was now hearing; but now that the reality seemed probable doubts began to assail her. With characteristic deliberation she weighed the situation. There were certain moments when steps should be taken—there was a time for all things. Had not the time for this divorce irreparably passed! Would it be wise just now! She spoke as if talking to herself. "Thirteen years is a long time. She has been clever enough to build up a sort of legend about herself. She has persuaded Napolione that she has brought him happiness—that without her he would lose it. Even the soldiers believe that. They say she has brought him luck—and them too. A belief like that cannot be broken by a simple gesture. This divorce will be unpopular with the people."

Jerome stared in amazement. This attitude on the part of his mother was incredible. "I never thought——"

Her head moved impatiently. "Figlio mio—you have never thought very deeply. You and Paulette are inclined to take life as play. I suppose that is only natural in young people who have never suffered." Her voice softened. "And you think, because I sit quietly at home, that I do not know what is going on, what people are saying, what far-reaching effects all seemingly small events have."

"Oh, I suppose she did help him in a way—if that is what you mean."

Letizia's eyes flashed. "I meant nothing of the sort. How has she ever helped him?"

"Well—at least with the noblesse—the Faubourg St. Germain. They call her one of themselves. They never call us that."

"They call her that when they wish to get something from her." Her lips curled scornfully. "How could a doll help a man of genius! She only thinks of satins and chiffons and changing her toilet five times a day. Her greatest

pride is in possessing five hundred dresses and two hundred and fifty hats. Is that a worthy ambition for the wife of an emperor! I have heard people say she is so good. Good! She is too lazy to be anything else. She is nothing but a piece of pretty furniture in a salone. Napolione would have been a greater man—if such a thing were possible—if he had had the right sort of woman beside him; one who loved him; one who could understand and appreciate him. But to be ruled by the senses alone—" She ended with a gesture of utter contempt.

Jerome waited until the storm had subsided and Letizia had once more picked up her knitting. He was always timid of her in her severe moods. "We shall have to help him find the right woman now. He relies upon you, Maman."

"Relies upon me!" Bitterness was in her voice now. "He listens to nothing I say—except my work in charity. He does that only because he knows I can administer it more zealously than any one else he can find. He rarely comes to see me any more. Why should he stop at Fontainebleau with this wife you say he is going to divorce instead of coming here to me! Why did he not listen to me when he planned to make the Pope a prisoner! For the first time in my life I went down on my knees to him and implored him not to make such a grave mistake—such a blasphemous step. He only answered that I did not understand politics. I understand them well enough to know when he is pulling down this edifice he has created upon his own head—upon the heads of all of us. And when Murat had taken the Holy Father prisoner and carried him to Savona, he pretended to me that his orders were misinterpreted. Why should he issue orders that can be misconstrued! He never gives obscure commands upon the battle-field."

Again Jerome waited. "At any rate, he is determined to divorce Josephine, marry again at once, and have his own

child. He seems to have forgotten entirely about Louis' children—or Eugene's. He has three women in view. The daughter of the King of Saxe, the sister of Emperor Alexander, the Austrian Emperor's daughter."

"Not one of them is a proper choice. He should marry a Frenchwoman. Why go out of one's own country for a wife!"

"Political reasons again, Maman."

"Political reasons should make one strengthen one's ties at home."

"Who would you suggest here?"

The needles were laid aside with a definite gesture. "One of his own family—one of our clan. He could not do better than marry Lolotte."

Jerome's amazement kept him a long time silent. "Lucien's daughter!"

Letizia nodded. "I have thought of it for a long time. She would make him a most suitable wife. She is one of us. She is French—and yet she is Corsican." Then disturbing thoughts began to sweep back over her. "But I am inclined to doubt what you have told me. This divorce should have happened years ago. I feel certain the Holy Father will not annul the marriage."

Jerome laughed carelessly. "What difference does it make to Napoleon what the Holy Father says? He only laughs when he is told that a bull of excommunication has already been signed by the Pope and is likely to be published at any moment."

Letizia could not restrain a shudder. "It is inviting ruin to make an enemy of the church." She clasped her hands painfully. "If there were only some way to make him listen to me!"

"Perhaps he will now, Maman. At any rate, he told me to tell you that he expected you to come to Paris at once

and preside at the Tuileries. You are to take Josephine's place. She is to be relegated to a back seat as a preparation for the divorce. There are to be great celebrations these next weeks in honor of the treaty of Vienna and the anniversary of the coronation. Napoleon wants it to be the most brilliant celebration of all."

Letizia's eyes clouded. "I have never been a part of these fêtes. I shall not be now."

"But, Maman, it is the emperor's command. Surely you will not fail him now. I think, with you there with him, he will go through with the divorce. Left alone, Josephine might get the upper hand again. It is the time to strike. We must all do everything to help him."

He talked on for a long time. Letizia resumed her knitting. She made no more replies to his words. She was listening to him no longer.

Letizia never entered the Tuileries without a sensation of impending tragedy. It was impossible for her to overcome the impression that this palace of the Bourbons was the abode of misfortune. Each time she passed through the Place du Carrousel, entered the Cour Royale and mounted the grand staircase that led to the Hall of the Marshals, she was reminded of the time when the murdered king and queen had passed there and gone out to face death. The event, recounted to her in far-away Corsica, had made a lasting impression upon her. Whenever she realized that her son was ruling there in place of the decapitated monarchs a shiver ran through her thoughts. Neither Versailles nor St. Cloud affected her this way; but in the palace, that was such an extraordinary combination of vast halls and uncomfortably small living-quarters, she invariably felt depressed and unhappy. Even now, surrounded by her children, presiding there as hostess for her emperor son, the

place so jammed with kings and queens—royal guests invited for the fêtes—that Count Ségur complained that his bureau was an impasse of monarchs, she did not find it reassuring.

"It is even more cheerless than the citadel at Ajaccio," she complained to Pauline. The too simple name of Paulette had long ago been discarded as being unworthy of so much glory. "There at least one can look out upon the mountains and the sparkling sea. What does one see here! Only dismal courtyards filled with tramping soldiers. It is like a place one comes to to await misfortune. That poor woman is surely finding it so. Poveretta."

Pauline lifted surprised eyes from the reflection of her diamond necklace she was admiring in a mirror. "Surely, Maman, you are not softening toward the old lady! Has she thrown herself upon your bosom and wept her inexhaustible tears?"

"I have not seen her since I came here. They say she is not well."

"She will brace up in time for the Te Deum to-day. When she knows the guests include the King of Wurtemburg, the King of Saxe, the King and Queen of Holland, the King and Queen of Westphalia, her own son, the viceroy of Italy, and all the reigning princes of the Rhine Confederation, she will don her rose tulle draperies, swathe her head in that ridiculous monument of stars and diamonds, and simper about as much as usual. She had better, too, for this is going to be her last chance to queen it over us. Napoleon told me he is only waiting for these festivities to be finished to go through the legal divorce."

Letizia's lips tightened. "He loves her still."

"La—la—Maman! Men don't forsake women they love. No one is forcing him to divorce her. The only thing in this world he cares for is power."

"And us—his own people."

"When we do exactly what he commands."

"Ungrateful girl! After all he has done for you! How many brothers would think of giving their sister a principality!"

"Guastala! Pooh! No one ever heard of it. I am sure I never had. It is only a little piece of ground of ten square kilometres with ten thousand people. As soon as the Senate had conferred it upon me, I told Napoleon it ought really to be a part of the kingdom of Italy and that I would sell it back to him for six million francs. I don't want land. I want jewels. How do you like my new necklace! They say there is none finer in Europe. I am glad you are wearing that white satin with the lamé border to-day. It makes you absolutely regal. Is that the diadem Napoleon gave you! Twenty diamonds—large ones too. Let me place it for you. Give it to me, Saveria. This is a part of your education they neglected in Corsica—how to place a diadem on a lady's head." She took the band of jewels from Saveria's hands and tried several effects upon her mother's hair. "Now—that is much better. And now that drapery that hangs from it. I hope I shall be as handsome at your age, Maman. No one would ever guess you were past fifty. And the mother of eight children."

"And such children!" Letizia said, resigning herself to Pauline's efficient hands.

"Is that a compliment or an accusation? You used to be proud of us. Called us your tokens of honor. And now they call you mother of kings."

"I should rather they called me mother of happy children." She caught Pauline's hands as they flitted toward her head and held them in a tight pressure. "But I fear they will never call me that. Are you kinder to Borghese these days, figlia mia?"

"I am as kind to him as he deserves. If Napoleon would only send him off on some of these endless campaigns I should be kinder still. He is such a bore. But I am happier than Louis. He takes life so seriously, poor old fellow. Hortense plagues the life out of him. She actually drove one of her ladies in waiting out of Holland because Louis smiled at her once or twice. Jealous women seem to have no sense of pride. Imagine letting a man know you cared that much about him! But you ought to be satisfied with Caroline, Maman. She is supremely happy, now that she sits on the throne of Naples. And she is rich besides. She sold Napoleon the Elysée Palace for a monstrous sum. I can't see why they all bother so much about thrones. I amuse myself much more without one. The only thing that worries me is money."

"Are you saving anything?"

Pauline laughed incredulously. "Not a sou. Why should I when you are doing that for the whole family! Oh, you needn't deny it, Maman. Every one knows you and Uncle Fesch have stored away millions in all sorts of places."

"I do not deny it. All of you will be glad enough of it one of these days."

"There you go again, Maman, with your black thoughts of the future. If you keep this up you will bring disasters upon us all. There is nothing like courting trouble to bring it."

Jerome burst into the room in all the panoply of his costume for the celebration of victory at Notre Dame. Pauline received him with hilarious laughter. If he were going to drive with Napoleon, as he announced, the people would take him for Josephine restored to all her former glory. In his suit of white satin embroidered heavily with gold, a lace jabot, ribbons, decorations, black velvet hat with white plumes and diamond buckles—and his clean-shaven, boyish

From a photograph by Alinari.

Jérôme Bonaparte, King of Westphalia.

From the painting by Gross.

face—he looked much more like a lady of the court than the warrior king he pretended to be.

In the tribune in Notre Dame reserved for the imperial family, Letizia sat surrounded by her family. Beside her was Josephine, clad in the rose tulle and diamond stars, as Pauline had predicted; but with a countenance hardly matching the festal robes. Beneath the heavy coat of paint and powder she was pallid with obvious despair. Her gentle blue eyes, dark with melancholy, never wavered from the dais where her husband now sat alone. Already she was relegated to a lower place—the first step toward complete oblivion. The words that passed between her and Letizia were coldly formal. Their perfunctory association of many years had brought neither trust nor sympathy. The crisis left them farther apart than ever.

Later that day, they were again side by side in the tribune before which was gathered the entire legislative assembly. The occasion was momentous. For the first time after a long period the Emperor appeared before the governing body to recount the exploits which had brought an apotheosis of glory.

Letizia felt herself swept forward on a wave of emotion that was made up wholly of pride. There was now no space left for trivial faultfinding, criticism, wounded sentiments. Everything was obliterated in the sound of the voice that was filling every corner of the vast hall. Words rang out with irresistible magnetism; words that were epic to her. She leaned forward intently. There was vicarious pleasure in every phase. Were not these exploits, in a certain way, her own! Was not the man who was recounting the conquest of Aragon and Castille, the expulsion of the Spanish government which had been the tool of perfidious Albion, the marching upon Cadiz and Lisbon, the placing of eagles on the ramparts of Vienna, the one she had created in her

own womb and given to the world! His voice played upon her heart like wind in young trees.

"Frenchmen! All those who oppose themselves to you will be conquered and defeated. . . . In you is embodied all the force and energy of the ancient Hercules!"

In him—in him alone. What could these people do without his fautless leadership, his driving inspiration! He had put fire into their souls. He had made the blood race in their veins. Now he was speaking of the annexation of Tuscany. He had reached the situation in Italy. Letizia held her breath. He was approaching the subject which had caused her so many sleepless nights. Her glance fastened on him.

"Though I recognize the necessity of the spiritual influence of the descendants of the first of pastors, I cannot reconcile the great interests of France with an influence directed against her independence. For this reason I have united the Papal States with our country."

Letizia's elation dwindled. A pale, gentle face with deep-set, burning eyes rose before her. She was once more back in the quiet room that looked over a city dominated by a symbolic dome. She again felt the comforting, peaceful influence that had suffused her with something much greater than happiness—an influence that had calmed lacerated wounds and made her forget and forgive—that had made her turn back to the son who had so deeply wounded her. Words in her thoughts drowned those now ringing in the hall. Little incidents began to obliterate the great occasion. A scene in Paris soon after her arrival there came back with flashing significance. The pale countenance with the gently burning eyes was facing a multitude. The frail sensitive hands were extended in blessing. A rough voice had risen in protest; scoffing words were heard above the sweet ones. Suddenly silence. Then a tremendous outburst as the crowd turned upon the scoffer. Again the gentle voice, ris-

ing above the tumult with calming force. "Do not injure him. Let me speak to him." And then, brought face to face with the savage countenance of the one who had refused the blessing: "Do not be angry with me. The benediction of an old man has never harmed any one." Now he was to be deprived of his palace, his lands, his people, his church. By her son. Letizia felt the crowded hall tumbling about her. Samson pulling the pillars down upon his own head. Yet all the time the ringing words were growing more and more resonant. They were now soaring out across the world.

"Now that our eagles have passed the Pyrenees, we shall sweep out upon the great ocean. We must make our power felt throughout the world. We must conquer everything. It is our only way to escape shame, defeat, death. The triumph of our army will be the triumph of the genius of good over evil—of moderation, order, courage over civil strife. Our friendship and protection will render tranquillity and happiness to the world."

Tranquillity and happiness. Were they only to be found on bloody battle-fields! This was not what the Holy Father had meant. Tranquillity and peace, yes; but created by brotherly love—not by desolation and death.

The assembly rose in a burst of acclamation. Letizia alone seemed to find the deafening applause alarming. Even the woman beside her appeared to have cast off grief to respond to the moment of glorification. The drive back to the Tuileries through brilliantly lighted streets—torches and fireworks gleaming through the chill dusk—brought no thrill. At the gala dinner that night her thoughts were still like lead. Seated at the table arranged for the imperial family and royal guests, she looked at the faces about her through deeply searching eyes. Flushed, care-free, unthinking—all of them. No—not all. Two were only masks to

hide heavy hearts. But the others—fat and rosy Catherine; sweet, modest, but unmistakably frumpy Julie; Hortense, always gracious but now with a deep touch of melancholy; Pauline, radiant in glittering embroideries and that recently acquired diamond necklace, laughing as if the whole world were nothing but play; Jerome, still wearing the satin and plumes of a prince of France; Louis, a strangely dismal and preoccupied king; Caroline, queen in appearance and reality. Had the dreams of all of them come true! Was there what she would call a real hearth to be found among any of them!

The next night at the Hotel de Ville another fête—this time for the people of Paris. The other functions had been for royal guests; this was for those Frenchmen and their families who had made their country famous. The halls were crowded. Again there was tumultuous acclaim. Yet through it all Letizia moved silent, thoughtful, observant—always aware of the ghost that was walking beside her in the guise of a bravely smiling woman.

"You don't give the impression of enjoying yourself, Maman. Don't you find the rabble amusing?" Caroline asked. "They do us. I have just heard a very good story of a man who watched us eating at the Tuileries the other night. He said that even if we were half gods we ate just like ordinary people."

"And it would be better," Letizia answered severely, "if you also lived like them."

At the Emperor's august command, the entire imperial family were gathered at nine o'clock in the evening, in full regalia, in the small salon between the gallery of Diana and the throne-room. Cambacérés and Regnault, secretary of state for the family, were the only persons unrelated by family ties present. A gilded table formed the centre about which chairs were grouped. A heavy silence brooded over

the room, over the gathering. Eyes met and shifted. The Queen of Holland sat beside her brother, viceroy of Italy, and held his hand. The King of Naples leaned easily on the back of Caroline's chair and gazed into her contented eyes. Jerome stroked his decorations with an air of boredom. Louis leaned forward in profound meditation. Pauline, one of the few times in her life, was silent; this no doubt due to the hand which her mother had laid upon her arm.

A door was thrown open. A sigh of relief escaped the gathering. Napoleon entered and, holding Josephine by the hand, led her to a place at the head of the table beside him. His head was held high—but obviously with effort. Hers was bowed low. When they had taken their seats, Napoleon glanced swiftly about the circle to see that each one was there. He bowed in turn to each; then rose. His first words were seemingly addressed solely to Regnault.

"I sent you to-day a sealed letter commanding you to appear here in order to be informed of the resolution that I and the Empress, my beloved wife, have taken." He turned slowly and faced the circle of intent faces. "I also wished the kings, queens, and princesses, my brothers and sisters, my brothers and sisters by marriage, my stepdaughter and stepson, as well as my mother"—for a fleeting moment his eyes rested in Letizia's—"should also be present to hear what I have made known to you." His voice trembled slightly. He paused. The silence became vibrant. "The policy of the Empire and the needs of my people—which have always guided my actions—demand that I leave after me an heir to this throne on which Providence has placed me. After many years I have lost all hope of having any children from my marriage with my beloved wife, the Empress Josephine. It is that alone which forces me to sacrifice the tenderest love of my heart and listen only to the good of the state—and dissolve our marriage. Having arrived at

the age of forty I still hold the hope of living long enough to rear in my beliefs and sentiments and policies those children which it will please Providence to give me. God alone knows what such a resolution has cost me. But no sacrifice is beyond my courage when I feel it is necessary and useful for the good of France." Tears suddenly welled up in the dominating voice and were left to run freely down the pallid face. "I must add that, far from finding fault, I have on the contrary only praise for the affection and tenderness always shown me by my beloved wife. She has embellished many years of my life. The memory will remain forever deeply etched on my heart. She was crowned by my own hands. I wish her to retain the rank and title of empress. I wish her also to think of me always as her best and truest friend."

He sank down heavily in the chair and made no effort to keep back tears. With his head lowered on his arms, his sobs sounded brokenly through the still room. Letizia made a movement to rise. Only Pauline's hand held her back.

"Wait, Maman! She is going to say something."

Josephine rose with visible effort. Her face was tragic. Paint and powder were disastrously streaked with tears. Carefully preserved beauty was no longer valuable. She seemed to have forgotten that she was facing a group of enemies—a clan that had hated her from the very first. She no longer cared. They had won at last. She was vanquished. She held a paper in her trembling hand, glanced down at it, smoothed it out in an attempt to gain some semblance of calm. Finally her voice came, low, broken, uncertain.

"With the permission of my august and beloved husband, I declare that, having no longer any hope of bearing a child that would fulfil the needs of his policies and the interests of France, I am happy to give him the greatest proof of love and devotion that has ever been given on this earth."

Her voice died away on a whisper. The paper fell from her hand to the table. Regnault leaned forward and picked it up to return to her. She shook her head and turned away.

"Please—please read it for me. I cannot."

Regnault cleared his throat and read in a colorless voice: "I appreciate deeply everything he has done for me. With his own hands he crowned me. And from the throne on which he placed me I have received only evidences of affection and love from the French people. Such sentiments make me willing to consent to the dissolution of a marriage which, from now on, would be an obstacle to the future glory of France and deprive it of the blessing of being governed by the descendants of a great man so obviously sustained by Providence to wipe out the evils of a terrible revolution and re-establish the church, the throne, and social order. But the dissolution of my marriage will not change the sentiments of my heart. The Emperor will always have in me his most loyal friend. I know that this act, made necessary by policies and great interests, has seared his heart. But both of us will be glorified by the sacrifice we are making for our country."

Regnault folded the paper carefully and laid it on the table. Then he unrolled a sheet of thick parchment, spread it before the Emperor, dipped a pen in ink and held it poised. Napoleon took the pen and hurriedly wrote his name in the place indicated. Then, handing the pen to Josephine, he held her free hand while she signed the document. This done, he put both arms about her, raised her gently from the chair and, half-leading, half-carrying her, left the room.

Regnault dipped the pen again in ink. "Your Imperial Highness, Madame Letizia Bonaparte, will please sign here."

Letizia rose slowly and approached the end of the table. Her step was heavy; but her hand, as it grasped the pen,

was steady. She did not see the document before her with the fresh signatures of those two names. She saw the room in the Rue Chantereine in which she had sat ten years before. She saw her son weeping, as he had wept just now. She heard him murmuring over and over those tell-tale words: "Mio dolce amore." She saw also the little room in Marseille where her brother and Joseph had insisted that she write a letter of congratulations to her son's wife. This was what she had been waiting years for. It had come at last. She had every reason to be satisfied and happy. But she was not. His tears had robbed triumph of all joy. How was it possible to feel any thrill in a victory when one saw only a broken heart!

"Aren't you going to read the articles before you sign your name, Maman!" Caroline counselled. "He has fixed her dowry at two million a year—to be paid by the treasury of the State."

Letizia brushed away the hand on her shoulder. What matter now if the dowry were a hundred million. She grasped the pen and wrote firmly "Madame Mère." Then rising, she avoided the eyes of the others, and passed quickly out of the room.

Outside, in the corridor, she found Pauline leaning against the wall dabbing her eyes with a handkerchief.

"Oh, Maman—weren't his words beautiful! I can't help weeping when he talks that way. His voice is divine."

Letizia made no comment. On the way to her room her hands were clenching continuously. With her door locked, she went straight to the prie-dieu and knelt down. Though her hands were lifted in prayer, her thoughts were far away. Only one phrase kept repeating itself on her lips.

"Madonna santissima—he still loves her."

II

RAIN and wind and snow did not prevent Letizia from following Napoleon to the Trianon, where he went immediately after the divorce. At her command, all her children then in Paris went with her. Even Elisa came up from her principality of Piombino to be present at the family gathering. "It is our moment of victory," Letizia counselled them. "We must guard it well. Napolione is sad, restless, uncertain. Our duty is to help him through these bad moments. If we fail him now there is no telling what those Beauharnais might be able to accomplish. I am far from contented over the arrangements he has made for his divorced wife. Already he has established her at the Elysée —in sight of the Tuileries; and at Malmaison opposite St. Cloud. He writes to her every day. I am not certain that he does not see her."

"I know he sees her, Maman," Caroline broke in with her tinkling, suggestive laughter. "He spent a whole day at Malmaison last week."

"Then the sooner he is married again the better for him —and for us. If Lucien would only send his daughter Lolotte here—as I wrote him to do. A marriage between her and Napolione would mean reconciliation. Lucien would once more be among us and in his right place."

"That is a dream, Maman. Napoleon will make this second marriage useful—as he did the first one. If it hadn't been for Josephine, Barras would never have made him commander of the Italian army. As for Lucien—only one thing will ever bring them together. Lucien must divorce his wife. I wish he had never seen the creature. She has

ruined his whole life. I don't blame Napoleon for not wanting her in the family. What was she? Absolutely nulle. Napoleon has been tremendously fair in offering her one of those worthless little principalities he is so fond of distributing. He even said he would give her a title and recognize the children if she would release Lucien. What more could any woman ask?"

Letizia looked at her daughter in amazement. That one of her own children could express such sentiments was a constant shock to her. She answered coldly: "She prizes the love of her husband more than anything else in the world. It would be wise if you felt the same way."

"Has she written to you?"

Letizia nodded.

"In answer to your letter?"

Again Letizia nodded.

"You mean, Maman, you suggested her divorcing Lucien!"

For the third time Letizia nodded, this time with lowered head and a mantling flush. "I may have been wrong. I prayed for help. My prayers were only answered with a deeper desire to have Lucien with me. After all—she is only a stranger. Lucien is my son."

Caroline's lovely eyes opened wide with curiosity. "What did you say to her, Maman?"

Letizia reached for the portfolio she had brought with her from Pont. It contained the carefully arranged envelopes in which her voluminous family correspondence was tabulated. Finding the envelope marked Lucien she drew forth two letters. "At first I was all sympathy for his attitude, as you know. I felt he was right. I still feel he is right. But—I see so clearly now that he will never be one of us so long as he clings to that woman. It was despair that drove me into writing to her. I thought, if she loved him

as devotedly as he did her, she would relinquish her place and urge him to meet Napolione's demands." She spread out the letter and read: " 'You know all the unhappiness your marriage has brought upon our family. And you must realize that I should never write to you in these terms if I were not finding the separation from my son too much to bear. The Emperor insists upon your divorce. It depends upon you whether Lucien will agree to it or not. The decision rests with you. It is the only way of escaping the disgrace which menaces you, your children, everything that is dear to you. If you take this step it will bring great happiness to your husband and your children. Do not hesitate between a life of disappointment and bitterness—which awaits you both if you remain obstinate—and a future of great glory. Your children will be recognized by the Emperor and will succeed to thrones. If you have any consideration for a mother who has made every sacrifice for her children, you will do this. It will be a brave and noble decision on your part which I will remember always.' "

"And what did you write to Lucien?"

Letizia read the second letter. " 'You will not, if you love me, my beloved son, hesitate any longer in acceding to the offers the Emperor has made you. Your fate, that of your family, mine, the happiness of us all depends upon you. There is no longer time to deliberate. I am anxiously awaiting this last consolation of my life as evidence of the tenderness which you have always shown me. Your refusal will shorten my days. You are in a position to render me great happiness in my declining years. Surely you have not the courage to refuse me this. I shall never ask you to do this again.' "

"And his answer, Maman?"

Letizia folded the papers carefully, slipped them in the envelope, and returned it to the portfolio. "Always the

same—that he was broken-hearted that his love for his wife should cause me sorrow." Tears stood in her eyes. "I may have sinned in writing him—as I sinned in signing that document that annulled Jerome's marriage. Sometimes a mother's love for her children blinds her judgment of what is right and wrong. I cannot bear the thought of always being separated from Lucien."

"At any rate you couldn't have done better by Jerome. See how happy he is with his amiable, stupid wife!"

Letizia frowned severely. "I love Catherine. She is a good wife. I only pray Napolione will find as good a woman."

The family discussions were endless. Cardinal Fesch arrived to add his advice. Napoleon listened to them all with unusual patience. His mood was strangely docile. For the first time in years Letizia saw him freed from the obsession of military campaigns and willing to spend long days without exhausting labor. Perhaps the weather had something to do with this. It was impossible to ride or go on hunting expeditions. Or perhaps it was only a lull before the storm of fresh undertakings. At any rate he remained among them, actually one of them, and spent hours in the company of the group Pauline had brought with her to amuse him, playing cards, taking part in their amateur theatricals, listening to music, even now and then playing reversi with his mother. He was amazingly patient with Elisa, who talked for hours—as tiresomely as a minister, he said—of how she had developed the business resources of Piombino, especially the alum-mines and the long-neglected quarries of Carrara. She had had hundreds of the Canova bust of the Emperor made of this marble and had sold them throughout Europe at great profit. She had rebuilt the château at Marlia, laid out extensive gardens, and filled the park with deer and sheep. Caroline was at her best, and

for the time being subjugated her own desires and ambitions to every whim of her brother. Murat was complaisant. Jerome was boyish and gay. Louis made a supreme effort to throw off melancholy and become a part of the clan's effort to help the Emperor through the days of gloom. As for Pauline, she outshone herself in beauty, dazzling costumes, and irresistible charm.

Letizia watched and waited. Her scheme for Lolotte, she realized with sinking heart, was doomed to failure. A special ambassador had been sent off to Russia. It had at last been decided that the Czar's sister would be the first choice. This met with strong protests from Letizia. She sought a quiet moment with Napoleon to express her opposition. It was not difficult to get him to listen to her these days.

"It means a priest of the orthodox Russian Church in the family."

"Always preoccupied with religious matters, Maman! I don't believe you will ever throw off the effects of that visit to Rome."

"Spiritual forces are the strongest in the world, my son; even stronger than your armies."

"All the more reason then that they should be combined. If your friend—and my enemy—would only see this, our troubles would be at an end."

Letizia leaned forward intently. "Release him from Savona, restore his states to him. The result will be peace for the whole world."

Napoleon frowned. "I thought you wished to speak to me about my future wife."

Letizia leaned back with relinquishment. It was always thus when she tried to change his attitude toward the Pope. "I want you to marry a Frenchwoman," she took up slowly. "Why go out of your own country?"

He rose abruptly and began pacing the floor. "If it were

possible for me to be guided solely by my personal desires, my bride would be chosen from among the daughters of the heroes of France. But a man must suit his actions to the customs of his own times, to the usages of other countries, to political considerations. Many sovereigns have sought my alliance. I do not believe there is one reigning family to which I could not propose this personal alliance."

"You have shown yourself above such considerations before."

"I am now thinking of my heir that is to carry on what I have begun."

"That heir should be wholly French. You have risen above the needs of foreign consideration. Your son should be of your own race."

He smiled leniently. "Corsican, Maman?"

"He could not come of better stock."

During the days of waiting for a reply from the Russian court Letizia's hopes rose. Reports concerning the Grand Duchess Anna were not promising. She was only fifteen years old. Women from that northern country did not bear children young. Marriage with her would mean waiting several years before a child would come. Time was pressing.

In a sudden storm of impatience Napoleon sent another courier to the Russian court to state that he had been kept waiting too long. At the same time an ambassador was sent to Vienna. The Austrian Emperor's daughter had been decided upon. Letizia heard the announcement with swift awakening of forebodings. "The family of that murdered queen!"

"A prolific family, Maman," Napoleon assured her. "You, above every one, should be pleased. Her ancestors thought nothing of bringing seventeen—one even twenty-six—children into the world." He threw back his head and laughed heartily. "That is the kind of womb I want to marry."

A few days later, when she had returned to Pont, Letizia received a letter from him. It was a brief but definite note. "I hurry to inform you that the arrangement for the contract of marriage with the daughter of the Austrian Emperor was ratified on the sixteenth of this month at Vienna; hence my haste in making this known to you."

Letizia read the short announcement without comment. She had long steeled her heart to disappointment. Years of thwarted desires had taught her that. There was no need of Lolotte coming now, except that, in a way, she would bring intimate tidings of that son from whom fate seemed to have separated her forever. She wrote a long letter to Lucien that night. Another dream shattered on the shoals of ambition.

When the command from the Emperor came from the Tuileries that he wished the entire family to be present at Compiègne to welcome his Austrian bride, Letizia sought a pretext for not going there. She had gone to the Trianon and St. Cloud after the divorce. She had felt that a necessity. It was a moment when she had thought she could be of some comfort to her son; it was a time also when she had hoped to exert some influence upon his choice. She had failed dismally. What good would her presence do at Compiègne! Besides the journey through slush and snow and biting wind was too much to undertake. She was beginning to feel the fatigue of such expeditions. Moreover, she had no inspiring desire to meet this new member of the family. Depressing thoughts made her indifferent. There would be time enough during the celebrations in Paris to become acquainted with a woman she already disapproved of. She would not be lacking in details, for already Caroline had been sent to the frontier to conduct the bride into France. The whole affair had become tinged with ominous sugges-

tions. What could possibly be more like tempting fate than all the preparations to make the arrival of the new Empress resemble in every detail the coming of Marie Antoinette to France! The marriage contract had been copied exactly from the one that had united that unfortunate archduchess to Louis XVI. Even the music that was to celebrate the nuptials was to be the same—"Iphigenia."

Caroline gave a vivid account of her journey. She had met the young bride at the frontier—a second Princess Lambale. Flowers and wreaths and tiresome speeches from officials made the journey an endless bore. A letter from the Emperor, received on the way, had caused the bride considerable perturbation. She could not read a word of the miserable scrawl. Caroline had tried to help her with it but all even she could accomplish was to make out the N at the end. Hours before they reached Compiègne, they halted in a village to change horses. The rain was pouring in torrents. A calèche drove up beside the royal coach and stopped. "And who do you suppose it was, Maman! Napoleon—dressed in an old uniform and soaking wet! Wasn't that just like him! He could not wait to receive her at Compiègne where the formal reception had been prepared. He had to rush ahead and take her by surprise. To find out what she was really like, I suppose. And as soon as he had sprung out of his carriage into ours, he chased us all out in the pouring rain while he embraced his bride like a peasant. It was a disgraceful proceeding. Even after we had arrived at Compiègne he broke up all the arrangements. Uncle Fesch told me he rushed to him to know if Marie Louise was not already his wife, on account of the marriage by proxy in Vienna. Assured of this, he carried her off to their rooms and we never saw them again until the next morning."

"What is she like?" Letizia asked.

Caroline raised her shoulders contemptuously. "Banale —like all those German princesses. Rather florid. Very fair. Slightly marked by smallpox; but you don't notice that much. Thick lips. Pale blue eyes. Rather deep bosom for her age. Clothes appalling. But Napoleon did not seem to mind. He said he found her fresh and young. I suppose it is the contrast with the old woman that makes her appeal to him."

Letizia nodded with conviction. "Just as I thought. Not in any way the woman for him."

Caroline laughed boisterously. "Would any woman, Maman, be good enough in your eyes for Napoleon! You would find fault with an angel sent down from heaven—if she were destined to be his wife."

Letizia did not answer the laughter. "I appreciate what a great man my son is. The right sort of wife is the most important thing in the world for him. It is his tragedy that he does not know how to choose women."

She was more than ever convinced of this when, a few days later, she met her new daughter-in-law at the Tuileries. She found nothing in the plain young woman that in any way matched the man who had chosen her to be his wife; more important still, chosen her to be the mother of the child that was to carry his great deeds, his race, his glory across future centuries. Simple enough, yes, and well bred, quiet, even slightly shy. But desperately commonplace. No wonder the girls raised such a tempest when they were told the Emperor wished them to be her train-bearers at the marriage ceremonies. They had played the part of servants once before—at the coronation. Were they always to be subjected to such indignities every time Napoleon wished it! They were princesses; one was a queen; and not only in name, in beauty, charm, accomplishments; they looked their parts while this florid person, even though she

was the descendant of many emperors, looked exactly like a dairyman's daughter! Letizia listened silently and made no comment. She would have liked nothing better than to tell them that she agreed with them wholly. Only when their voices grew higher and higher in protest against imperial commands, did she raise her hand to silence them. "My daughters, you must not forget that the Emperor is accustomed to be obeyed. If he orders you to carry the train of his bride, you must do it. I do not say he is right in insisting upon this; but if he commands it, you will obey him. And I want no undignified pranks played by you, Paulette. I have not forgotten what you did at the coronation."

Realizing the importance of example—and hoping thus to make them more amenable to the occasion—she took up her abode in the Paris house and went through the numerous ceremonies with an austere grace that was beyond criticism and gave no hint of the utter boredom and fatigue she was undergoing. The pageant was seemingly without end. There was the gathering in imperial robes at St. Cloud; the tiresome rendering of Zaire; the civil marriage. The next day, again imperial robes, this time with jewels and diadem, for the religious ceremony in the Salle Carrée of the Louvre; after this the review of the imperial Guards, a banquet, a concert in the Hall of the Marshals, fireworks, then the benediction of the bridal bed and the long procession to the bridal chamber—endless hours, always standing, always formal, always in view of critical eyes and whispering gossips. And still another day, standing beside the throne listening to speeches that went on forever, followed by presentations of the whole court, officials, magistrates, generals, bishops, mayors—apparently the whole of France. How desperately exhausting it was! Only one thing made the ordeal possible—her son's face. How radiant he was, how smiling, how gallant—almost, yes, quite boyish. Her

heart warmed at the vision. No matter if he had few words for her during the occasion, she was content merely to look on at so much happiness. It seemed to her that his cup had reached the point where it was flowing over.

Back at Pont, her duty fulfilled and released from further obligations, she sent her household upon a holiday. Only Saveria remained with her. She felt that she had earned a long repose. The rain and wind might bluster to its full outside. Within it was warm and comfortable. The others might continue to strive and struggle through their continual discontent, knowing always where to find her when they needed her. She was always there, waiting for them, ready to welcome them and draw them to her bosom. But while waiting she could read her letters, send off messages to those most dear to her, have long uninterrupted visits from her brother when he came from Rome or Lyons, play a quiet game of reversi with the abbé from the village several times a week, and when alone sit before the fire, glance now and then at the dominating marble bust on the pedestal, and muse through the hours over the glory that had come, that was now in its most dazzling effulgence. Yet never completely put aside was a constant thought. It lurked in the shadows always. Could such glory last!

Tidings of the new Empress reached her from many quarters. The marriage appeared successful. Every one declared the Emperor was desperately in love with his bride. Her presence had caused some changes at court. It was no longer the same as in the days of Josephine. Faces that had made the Empire were no longer so conspicuous. The ancien régime—the Faubourg St. Germain—was rushing to the Tuileries to make their courtesies before an empress that represented everything they worshipped and respected. The days of the revolution were gone forever. As a wife this stranger from Austria was showing herself docile,

amiable, inoffensive. She passed her days in harmless occupations; she worked at small pieces of tapestry, she had music and drawing lessons, she was learning to ride so as to accompany the Emperor at the hunt. In a word, she was showing herself a perfect housewife. Intrigues, liaisons, scheming friends had no part in her existence. And it was whispered about that she had hopes of soon giving France the heir so impatiently awaited. Letizia nodded. Meno male. And again came the lurking phrase: Provided it lasts.

One day a royal carriage arrived unannounced before the doors of the château at Pont. Letizia was told that the Empress was in the salon. She hurried to greet her daughter-in-law. "But I was not told to expect Your Majesty!"

Marie Louise kissed her, blushing at the consternation her unexpected visit seemed to have caused. "I have not come as the Empress. I came only as your daughter. May I remain to luncheon?"

Letizia returned her kiss warmly and put her arms about her. Simplicity always won her. "Then we shall have luncheon together and not once mention that the Emperor's wife is sitting at the table with the Emperor's mother."

The blustering March night beat against the windows of the Tuileries. The penetrating roar of the bourdon of Notre Dame—like nothing so much as the murmur of giant bees—rose above the cheers of the multitude in the Cour Royale before the palace. Now and then a rocket shot up into the sky and disappeared. A cry from the crowd rang out encouragingly. Letizia had been there hours; ten, perhaps more; ever since the messenger had come the evening before to her house with a command from the Emperor to hurry to his side. The dream of his life was about to come true. The Empress was in labor.

The curtains of the window protected her from the

throng rushing to and fro across the room. Ladies in waiting, lackeys, maids, and most of all Corvisart, the court physician, were whispering excitedly. Their agitation and nervousness made Letizia smile disdainfully. They were all acting as if this were an unusual event; as if at that very moment thousands of women throughout the whole Empire were not experiencing the same agony. Agony! They called it that. Her smile deepened. It had never been that to her. And she had borne eight children. She turned her back on them with barely concealed impatience. How different all this was from her accouchements at Ajaccio! There no one had lost his head or become excited. Women had children there as a matter of course. She, with the help of Saveria, had got through the ordeal silently. Only once had there been any excitement; that day of Assunzione when she had had to hurry from the Duomo and only reached home in time to throw herself on a couch in the salone where her son of battle had first seen the light of day. Her son of battle. And now there was to be another. A shiver ran through her. But it was only momentary. Pride blotted out ominous thoughts. She lifted her head proudly. It was she who had given the world this great man. But for her the race would not have existed. And now it was to be continued—carried on—made eternal.

A piercing shriek rang through the corridors. Letizia frowned. Why could not this woman who had been chosen to carry on the race bear her pain silently! Why cry out against the gift which the Madonna was bestowing upon her! Travail was incidental, soon forgotten. One should be brave enough to bear anything for the happiness that was to follow. Only weaklings cried out in protest. But these cries were indicative. This woman was in no way worthy of being the mother of the son she was bearing. She was trivial, commonplace, of an alien race, stupid. She was

showing herself all of that in this moment of apotheosis. What else could be expected of such an insipid creature!

She glanced over her shoulder. Still all the coming and going and whispering. And that despicable woman, the Duchess of Montebello, managing everything as though she were the Empress. Her orders were law. Even the Emperor was deferring to her commands. She stood at the entrance to the royal bedchamber like a military commander. No one was allowed to enter without her permission. Even when Letizia had come with the intention of remaining with her daughter-in-law during the moments of crisis, this formidable woman had barred the way.

"The Emperor has commanded my presence here." Letizia drew herself up haughtily.

"Naturally, Madame. But no one but the physicians must enter the bedroom of the Empress. She is in agony."

Letizia felt her hand grasped. Napoleon was beside her, his face livid, his hands clammy.

"Cannot you do something, Maman! She is suffering torture. Corvisart says they may have to use the irons."

Letizia flashed a look of scorn at the Duchess who had not moved from the door. "Am I to see the Empress—or——"

Napoleon drew her brusquely into the room. They approached the bed. Letizia laid her small, cool hand upon the fevered brow of the suffering woman. She said nothing, but her eyes were full of gentle words of encouragement.

Marie Louise's eyes opened and met hers. Her lips twisted into a suppressed cry. "Why am I allowed to suffer this way!" Her glance, full of violent reproach, flashed upon Napoleon. "Must I—just because I am an Empress—be sacrificed!"

Letizia's hand pressed more firmly on the tossing head. A word out of the past came back to her. How often she

had used it herself. Perhaps it might help this weak, protesting woman. She leaned nearer her. "Corraggio, mia figlia—corraggio! We must all suffer for a little while. I have passed through this furnace eight times. See—I am still well and strong. It will be the same with you. Believe me when I tell you you are in no danger. There is nothing to fear."

Marie Louise turned away. Words were well enough, but they did not alleviate pain.

"You really believe there is no danger, Maman!" Napoleon looked up from where he was kneeling beside the bed.

Letizia's eyes were unwavering. "This is only natural. All women suffer. But they soon forget. A first child——"

She stopped. Her son was no longer listening to her. His arms were about his wife; he was covering her face, her arms, her hands with kisses; he was beseeching her to try to forget what she was suffering and think only of the child she was about to give to the world. Letizia watched him silently. Her heart expanded in a warmth of maternal affection. Had any woman ever had such a son! His eyes. How wonderful they were at this moment; how gentle, sweet, filled only with abounding pity! Was it possible they were the same eyes she had seen scowl and send forth lightning! But his pallor frightened her. He had become as pale as death. Another tortured cry seemed to have struck into his soul. He sprang up, swayed unsteadily, then rushed out of the room.

The scowling Duchess left the door and came to the bed. Letizia's eyes and hers met. For a few moments there was a silent battle. The Duchess returned to the door without speaking.

And now morning was not far off. The cries continued. The rushing about had increased. Corvisart was calling for the Emperor. Dubois said he had been in a hot bath for

hours seeking respite for overtaut nerves. Corvisart insisted that he be sent for to come at once to the bedchamber.

"The crisis is reached," he explained to Letizia. "There is only one hope. The child must be taken. Nothing else will save the Empress. I dare not do this without the Emperor's permission."

Letizia looked at him steadily. "And the child?"

Corvisart held out his hands. "I cannot say. We may be able to save it. We may not."

Letizia's eyes did not waver. "You know that this child —a child of his own—is now the most important thing in his life. About it centres all his dreams, his desires. If you do not save the child—" She stopped. Corvisart waited. When she remained silent, looking at him so steadily that his eyes fell before hers, he attempted words and failed. He only continued to murmur: "I cannot save her life in any other way."

Letizia turned from him and once more gazed out of the window. "The decision is not with me. He must decide."

A renewed wave of whispers ran through the room; then intense silence. Napoleon, in dressing-gown and slippers, more pallid than before, trembling, uncertain, stood in their midst. He came directly toward Corvisart and Letizia.

"What is it, Corvisart? They said you wanted me."

Corvisart glanced toward Letizia. In answer she nodded toward her son. And as the physician explained that a last desperate resort was necessary, she listened intently. What would Napoleon say! A life rested in his hands. Perhaps two. His wife's; his son's. But what did he care for life! Words that had sunk deep into her memory flared up. They burned before her with unescapable certainty. He had spoken them when she had once bemoaned the fact that his conquests were costing innumerable lives. "You are not a soldier, Maman. You do not know what a soldier's soul is

like. I have become great in camp. A man like me cares little for the lives of a million men. But do not think that I do not possess a heart that feels like yours. I am a very kind-hearted man. But since my earliest childhood—since those days when you let me play with a wooden sword and a drum —I have taught myself to silence the gentler side of my nature. Now—it is dumb."

Would it still be dumb! The words had been spoken of his faithful followers, of those hundreds of thousands of men who had given their lives that he might be glorified. Beside them what was the life of this one woman! She counted for nothing except that she was the instrument by which his heir was to be brought into the world. Could he be expected to spare her life instead of the child's! Was that not asking too much! The future of his race was at stake. His dynasty was to stand or fall by this child. And yet— Protests rose violently within Letizia. His was not the right to decide. No one but God should do that. Her thoughts raced back to Carlo. He would not have hesitated a moment. He would have spared her at all costs. Her hands clasped in uncertainty. What would her son do! He had failed her many times; he had shown himself granite to many of her pleas; he had turned his back upon Lucien; he had recently treated Louis like a traitorous stranger; he had forced Joseph into a situation that was rapidly leading toward disaster. He could see nothing but his own will. Others no longer existed for him.

Corvisart had finished speaking. Napoleon was standing before him with amazed, outraged expression. He looked as if he were ready to strike the physician down. Then his voice came, loud, commanding, angry.

"You ask me what to do! You know there is only one thing possible! Save the mother! Think only of her!"

Letizia turned away to hide her joy. Nothing else mat-

tered now. He had shown himself to be the son that every woman would have taken joy in. No matter what the world might call him, tyrant, murderer, infamous ogre of Corsica who one day would eat his mother for breakfast, she would know that such curses emanated only from those who had not seen into his heart. He had not hesitated one second in relinquishing his dream of a lifetime. Think only of the mother. The words had been spontaneous. Letizia's heart emptied of its years of grievances. It had been washed clean of complaints. Come what might in the future—no matter what had happened in the past—she forgave him everything. She made a resolution during those moments that was to remain with her always. She would never again blame him for anything.

When the bourdon of Notre Dame ceased ringing and the roar of cannon began to boom out across the city—announcing the birth of a son—she felt no thrill. The great moment had been when her son showed himself a man of profound human sympathies. Even when he came to her, carrying a little bundle which he put into her arms with the words "The King of Rome" she had nothing to say. Her exaltation had already reached its apotheosis.

III

THE year had come to an end—grazie a dio! A year that had begun on a Friday and was designated by that fatal thirteen. No wonder it had been a time of trouble and disaster. Paoletta had fallen ill and gone south to seek a cure in the warm sunlight of Provence. She had been away for months and months, her absence a deep sorrow to Letizia, who found her light-hearted gaiety a support in these days of gathering clouds. She, alone of them all, was not constantly absorbed in political intrigues and ambitious strivings. Elisa could think of nothing but improving her principality of Piombino and developing its interests to a point which Letizia felt was leading straight toward disaster. A devil must have taken possession of the child to drive her into suppressing a number of religious orders and confiscating their incomes to meet the expense of improvements. Her conduct demanded many letters filled with reproaches and disapproval. Her high-handed, blasphemous action would surely bring down the wrath of the Holy Father upon her and end in excommunication—as it had with her emperor brother. Caroline wrote constantly from her kingdom of Naples, but her news was far from comforting. Both she and Murat seemed to be eternally embroiled in both family and governmental difficulties. Lucien, having refuted all attempts at reconciliation with his brother, had finally been ordered out of the Empire. Napoleon, exasperated at his defiance, had refused to permit him to live in any of the states over which he ruled. This meant that he must seek a home elsewhere. But where! A letter from him told of his imminent departure for England, Sardinia,

Spain, America—any place in which he could forget that he was the brother of a tyrant determined to hound him out of his native land. Months followed without tidings—literally months of anguish for Letizia—with only one fact to cling to: that he and his entire family had taken refuge on an American ship at Naples, procured for him by Murat, and departed for an unknown destination. Finally a letter came from Malta; and later one from England, where he stated he had finally settled. But he was far from happy, in spite of being surrounded by sympathetic friends, for he was still under the ban of being the brother of the man whom the whole of Great Britain considered a menace to the peace of the world. Letizia read his letters with sinking heart; and yet with a coldness that was a new element in her attitude toward this dearly beloved son. That he should have chosen a country that was the declared enemy of his brother hurt her to the quick. Any other place than England would have been right, natural, understandable; but perfidious Albion—never! For the first time her words to Lucien became formal, almost perfunctory. To accentuate her harassed emotion was the growing difficulty—it had practically developed into open warfare—between Louis and Napoleon over the proper administration of Holland. Endless political discussions that seared the heart and created wounded feelings. Why could they not arrange these matters peacefully and live in harmony!

"Because, Maman, he appointed me king in name and considers me nothing but a sort of sublimated police to carry out his orders. The Dutch people love me; I love them; I have their interests at heart. Napoleon wishes them to be nothing but a small appanage of his empire. I shall not return there if he does not give me a free hand. I married his stepdaughter to please him, an alliance I have never ceased to regret. Look at what a mésalliance it has been!

She amuses herself here in Paris and with her mother at Malmaison and Navarre—pretending to maintain a court of her own. Any one would think she and the old woman were still ruling France. I see my children rarely. They hardly know me. However, I don't care. I never loved her. I shall never return to her. I have broken with her definitely. I am utterly miserable. I wish only to remain with you, Maman—but not here at Pont. This is the most dismal spot in the world. Let us go to your house in Paris."

Letizia closed her thoughts to the peacefulness of Pont, shut the house, and opened the one in Paris. It would mean constant movement and agitation and, more against her wishes still, a relinquishment of the economy which she felt was becoming more and more necessary now that troubles were mounting up for them all. Who was there but herself to help them if they insisted upon antagonizing the brother who had made all their riches possible! Already she had answered a plea for funds from Lucien. And she had felt it only right to aid Paoletta in those increasing expenses made necessary by her illness. But as Louis was in trouble, ill, disheartened, miserably unhappy, it was her duty, her privilege, her happiness to do anything that might cheer his gloomy days.

But she had not counted on turning her house into an extravagant court. Louis' demands caused her considerable bewilderment. He insisted upon living there like a king. Was he not still King of Holland! His marshals, his masters of horse, his aides-de-camp, his chamberlains, his maîtres d'hôtel, his valets, his cooks—a veritable forest of followers—turned the quiet house into an incessant torrent. There was no peace either day or night. People were coming and going at all hours. It was like living in the middle of the street. And what strange tastes this restless son of hers had! He must have music all the time; he must give elab-

orate parties for his children when they visited him; he must have gatherings of literary men, artists, actors who ate quantities of food and emptied the cellar of the best wines. And all the time he was really ill. He was never without a cold, a fever, violent pains in his limbs. His paralyzed arm was constantly troubling him. A train of doctors was in attendance to take his temperature and pulse at all hours. And worse than anything else were the meetings between him and Napoleon. High words, furious silences, left her helpless to soothe either of them. It was with actual relief that she saw the situation come to a head and Louis—like Lucien—take himself off, leaving behind the throne his brother had conferred upon him. It meant another break in the family; another wound in her heart; but she clung to the hope that distance and separation—Louis wrote that he would live thereafter in Gratz—would soften the antagonism which propinquity only aggravated.

Then Joseph, far away in Spain, his family left behind at Mortfontaine, writing always of the benevolent attempts to solve difficulties and win the love of the Spaniards—attempts continually frustrated by Napoleon. No wonder he was finding himself surrounded by subjects that had revolted and were now carrying on a hopeless guerilla warfare. He could not much longer carry out the orders sent him, of which he so deeply disapproved. Even quiet, homely Julie was beginning to turn against what her husband convinced her was the arbitrary system of the Emperor.

And now, piling up profound fear, even horror, upon her crisis of distraught thoughts, Napoleon had taken the impious step of having the Holy Father brought from Savona and imprisoned at Fontainebleau. This was thrusting one's defiance in the face of God. It was the gesture of a madman. She could control herself no longer. Throwing all restraint to the winds she hurried to the Tuileries and spoke

From a photograph by Giraudon.

Elisa Bonaparte, Grand Duchess of Lucca and Piombino.

From the painting by Gérard.

more frankly to him than she had for years. The vision of the pale, gentle face whose beneficence had made her overcome resentment and return to live beside her wilful son drove her into harsh invectives. He was committing sacrilege! He was drawing the curse of God—of the whole world—down upon his head! He was wrapping himself in utter darkness! Napoleon listened coldly to her outburst. Did she wish to show herself opposed to the policies of her son? "I wish to show myself the mediator between the Vicar of Christendom and the Emperor of France." Then she should convince the old man that his duty was to throw off the influence of his paltry Italian cardinals, relinquish his pretensions to the Papal States, and hold his spiritual court at Avignon—as his predecessors had done. As a last resort she pled that the good offices of her brother be used. But alas—this only added to her distress. The cardinal, in an attempt to reconcile the two enemies, only complicated the situation by showing himself too much disposed in favor of the church. The intimate relation between brother and sister which had existed for a lifetime was strained to the breaking-point. Letizia found her brother's criticism of his nephew unwisely violent.

"What I said was only for his good," the cardinal responded. "He cannot rule both the spiritual and the temporal world. It is a crime against the church to detain the Holy Father here. You have said this yourself. I only made it reasonably clear to him. And what thanks have I got for speaking plainly!" Fesch met his sister's angry eyes without flinching. "I have been exiled. It practically amounts to that. When I had finished speaking he turned upon me with these words: 'Enough of your arguments, you prophet of misfortune! I have no further need of your advice. Return to your diocese at Lyons and remain there until I give you permission to leave.' That was my thanks for laboring to help your emperor son."

Letizia felt that all through those years of what the world was calling unprecedented glory—and outwardly they were surely magnificent—she was struggling along a path that increasing age was making doubly painful. She was over sixty now—a time when her days should have been contented and peaceful. Instead, she was experiencing all the sadness, all the desperate emotions, all the distressing incidents of which a maternal heart was susceptible. At times despondency almost conquered her. The old inspiring thought continued to save her from complete despair—their need of her. She still felt herself the head of the clan, perhaps more so now than ever, since the glory of the family, its interests, its vivid and tangible realities, were threatened on all sides. All these constant dissensions were disintegrating; they lessened strength; they broke down the great power of unity. She must go on struggling with them, writing to them, counselling them, urging them to conquer their passions, their inclinations, their personal ambitions for the preservation of the clan. Had she not sacrificed many of her own desires, even principles, for the sake of peace! Napoleon had risen to the dizziest of heights and had carried them all along with him. This, of course, was only what he should have done; one's first duty is always to one's family; but it was also the duty of the family to bow before the authority of the one in power. The fate of each one of them depended upon a common purpose. Their hearts must be softened toward one another, she would help them find ways of reconciliation, they could call upon her for anything that would bring them together again upon the old footing which had made everything possible. They must not forget that she was their guide, their mentor, their mother, the one that loved them better than her own life.

And still another war. This time Napoleon had gone off into the fastnesses of Russia, taking Jerome and Murat

with him. Uncertainty and months of silence were to add to already gloomy days. Marie Louise was still showing herself a dutiful wife and respectful to her husband's mother, addressing letters to her with the affectionate greeting "My dear Maman" but never once turning to her for advice. The Duchess of Montebello remained at the helm and controlled the royal household. Only one person at court now appealed to Letizia—the Countess of Montesquiou, whom the Emperor had chosen to be his son's constant companion. Her gentleness, her dignity, and most of all her efficiency appealed to Letizia. When she went to the Tuileries to see her grandson she tried always to choose a time when the Empress was not there, thus escaping formal, insipid conversation and being free to pass the visit with Madame de Montesquiou and the child, who was rapidly growing into a lovely boy.

"Hardly a Buonaparte," Letizia said, looking at him with varying emotions. "He is too rosy and fair for that. His hands are like lilies."

"But so are yours, Madame."

"Mine are white, yes, but not of this German pastiness. None of us ever had blond curls."

"The Emperor finds no fault with him. Have you seen them playing together? It is a joy. One would think the Emperor was the same age as the King of Rome. They play like two children. Sometimes I tremble over their games. At luncheon, when I carry the King to the table, the Emperor lets him taste the Bordeaux."

"A little red wine in water strengthens a child. I always gave it to mine as soon as I had stopped nursing them."

"But not rich sauces, Madame! The Emperor will let the King taste anything he is eating."

"I never had rich sauces to give my children."

"Once the Emperor dipped his finger in a brown sauce

and painted his nose and cheeks and chin with it. He told his son that was the way he used to look after he had eaten a dish of maccheroni his mother had cooked for him. It delighted the King so that he insisted my face be painted in like manner. Maman Quiou, as he calls me, must do everything the Emperor did."

"He loves his father?"

"He adores him. Children always love those who know how to play with them."

"And his mother?"

Madame de Montesquiou avoided the too direct glance. "The Empress has many occupations. She is studying drawing with Monsieur Isabey; she plays the piano with Monsieur Paer; she is much interested in embroidering tapestry; she has her riding lessons; she——"

Letizia interrupted caustically: "And of course the Emperor has nothing to do."

Once more back at Pont, her staff reduced to the smallest possible number, Letizia settled down for the winter. Hardly any news of the Russian campaign reached her directly. Catherine, at Cassel, sent her excerpts from Jerome's letters, but these were more descriptive of his personal exploits than the progress of the Grand Army. Communiqués in the papers showed a tendency toward avoiding details. But it was easy to see the difference between this campaign and preceding ones. Formerly each day was a record of splendid successes, glorious battles, flamboyant victories. Now there was an ominous lack of reported incidents. Aloof from politics, interested only in what was of immediate importance to the family, Letizia viewed this distant campaign serenely. It was bound to come out successfully in the end, with Napoleon leading the Grand Army. But fragments from letters suggested vague uncertainty. The abbé from the village appeared depressed. Sa-

veria reported growing discontent among the shopkeepers, the butcher, the baker. Almost all the shops were being conducted by women, the mothers and wives and daughters of men who had disappeared into unknown Russia. Younger sons, mere boys, were fulfilling the duties of older men. Poverty and scarcity of food were wide-spread. Mournful black was in evidence everywhere. Dreary autumn days accentuated the uncertain feeling of gloom.

Letizia soon began to feel that something was wrong. A visit from Laure Junot, bringing with her a letter from her husband, a general in the Russian campaign, increased her fears. In a moment of quick decision, she returned to Paris and opened her house. She received every evening. It was the only way for her to find out what was afoot. Many people came. Their discontented countenances drove her into asking questions. Stories of unheard-of suffering, imminent disaster, reached her couched in evasive words. Moscow began to be the word on every one's lips. Moscow. But that was the other side of the world! Yes—but the Grand Army had finally reached there and found the enemy gone. An empty victory.

Driving back from Mortfontaine, where she had spent the day with Julie—a far from cheerful visit, as Julie had read discouraging passages from Joseph's letters—she found the streets of Paris strangely deserted. She told her coachman to make inquiries. A workman in blue blouse lifted his shoulders and laughed. "Where do you come from! Haven't you heard the news! The Emperor is dead. The Republic will be proclaimed to-morrow."

Letizia heard the words distinctly, heard the man laugh, saw the indifferent gesture of his shoulders. For a second the world fell to pieces about her. Then the blood mounted to her face, she leaned out of the carriage and beckoned to the man. "Why do you laugh at such stories?"

The man doffed his cap before the blazing eyes of his interlocutress. Her manner imposed that much. But he continued to smile indifferently. "Because it means the end of all our troubles. No more wars. No more death. No more starvation."

"Who tells you such lies?"

"Every one knows it is true, Madame."

"I do not know it—and for a very good reason. It is not true. It is all a lie. Go tell your friends that. Wait. Tell them the mother of the Emperor told you so."

She drove straight to the Tuileries and was told the entire Council was sitting in state. She would not wait for the end of the conference and sent word to Cambacérès that she must see him at once. He received her with a reassuring smile. A coup d'état had been attempted but, fortunately, had failed. A certain Malet, once a general during the Republic, a madman really, had got some information regarding reverses in Russia, gathered accomplices about him and published a despatch announcing the Emperor's death. For a few hours the situation had appeared serious; but in the end the conspirators had been seized, thrown into prison, and would be shot on the morrow. "Rest assured, Your Imperial Highness, we have completely suppressed this attempt to overthrow the government. I have just appeared on the balcony and announced to the people that the Emperor is still alive and is returning victorious."

"The man who spoke to me laughed. How did the people here receive your announcement?"

"With great enthusiasm. Every one cried: 'Vive l'Empereur!' "

Letizia turned away slowly. There was something in Cambacérès' cheerfulness that she found forced. When she reached home she immediately sent for Decazes. "Is there something I have not been told? Has the Emperor failed in Russia?"

Decazes could give her no satisfactory details. Everything was rumor. The belief was general that the Grand Army had suffered its first defeat. The lines of communication between that distant country and France were too great; food was difficult to obtain; the winter had rushed down upon them with unprecedented cold; it was fairly certain the Emperor had decided to return without continuing the campaign.

"That is not like him," Letizia commented thoughtfully. "He has never yet turned back."

"It may be he is only retreating for the moment."

He had never been known to retreat. Had he not stood the burning sands of Egypt without hesitation! Why could he not support a Russian winter! A letter from Pauline, now at Nice, accentuated already aroused fears. She was not well enough to return to Paris, but she was being kept au courant by letters from friends. Was there truth in all their alarming words! Were Napoleon's losses so great that he was returning destitute and in need of funds! She was sending by special courier her diamond necklace. It had cost over two hundred thousand francs. Picot, the jeweller, had said it was worth much more. She wanted it sold. Would her mother do this and hold the amount until Napoleon returned; then, if it were true that he needed help, she wanted the money given to him. He had done everything a brother could do for a sister. It was a moment in which she could show that, though perhaps at times apparently indifferent, she really adored him and would do anything to help him.

Letizia brooded over the letter for several days. It brought little Paoletta very close to her. She had always known her heart was in the right place. In spite of extravagance, frivolous tendencies, wild amusements which the world criticised, she was always glowing with affection. That she should be the first of the family to make a gesture

like this was only in character. She would not wait until the last moment. She would be ready beforehand. However, the jewels were not sold. Letizia had them put away in safekeeping. Then she wrote to her brother who was still confined to his diocese at Lyons and told him that she wished to convert some of her holdings into money. She was in need of a million francs at once. She gave no explanation of this unprecedented action. Even to her brother she would not yet admit her fears.

On a cheerless December morning she hurried to the Tuileries. The return of the Emperor had just been announced. The palace was crowded with a waiting throng. The grand staircase, the hall of the Marshals, all the antechambers were filled. The flashing glitter of uniforms was everywhere; yet, in spite of the glittering effect, there was little gaiety. Countenances were gloomy and discontented. She was conducted to the Emperor's private bureau and found him walking up and down the floor with the King of Rome in his arms. The picture was reassuring.

Letizia drew a deep breath of relief. "I knew it was not true. They have told me nothing but dismal stories of your losses, your discouragement, your defeat. White-livered cowards! All of them!"

Napoleon's eyes met her steadily; then he smiled. It had been many months since she had seen that smile.

"If they were all like you, Maman!" He held the child tightly against his breast. "I hear they tried to make you believe I was dead. What if I were! Do not my dynasty, my son, all the institutions of the Empire that I have created still go on!"

"I never believed what they told me, my son."

"You, no. But the others." Suddenly his eyes clouded. He placed the child in a chair and turned toward the win-

dow. "The army did suffer losses. The winter began earlier than I expected. My soldiers are still suffering there. I fear Murat has fled back to Naples instead of carrying out my commands. Jerome—" His eyes flashed with contempt. Then his head lifted. "But I still have three hundred battalions left—without counting the men in Spain. If my enemies form a coalition against me, I am still strong enough to conquer them."

Letizia listened without entirely comprehending the significance of the words. A coalition formed against him! That meant Russia, Prussia, Great Britain. All enemies! More war! Then there was truth in all these rumors. She stared at her son with dulled eyes. Suddenly a chill of apprehension shot through her. For the first time she saw that his face had lost the look of the conqueror.

"It is the moment for peace, my son—not more wars."

Napoleon, with his back to her, gazed fixedly through the window.

She glanced about the room. The child was playing contentedly with a gold tassel his father had given him. For a few moments they were alone. Letizia drew nearer and lowered her voice.

"My son—I have a million francs for you."

Napoleon turned upon her with a scowling glance. "You believe what they have told you!"

"No, no—I believe nothing but what you tell me. But I want you to know that everything you have given me is yours. I have been saving and saving through the years. Now I am very rich. I have holdings not only in France but in many other countries—even in England. There is no reason that any of my children should ever be in want."

Suddenly the scowl vanished and the smile took its place. He drew his mother to him in a tight embrace. "If they

were all like you, Maman! But I do not need your savings —nor any one's. I still have two hundred million francs in the war-chest. My star has not yet begun to pale."

The beating rumble of drums, the blasts of bugles, the call of trumpets, the ringing of bells, military music no longer thrilled Letizia as it had in her youth. The demand of hot, coursing blood had cooled. She wanted peace now. And there was no peace in the world. Nothing but war upon war—with a rapidly growing, alarming difference. Heretofore battles had been a succession of victories fought and won upon distant territory; they were now growing nearer and were admittedly battles of defense. Russia and Prussia had joined their armies to force the invincible Grand Army to remain within the confines of France. Great Britain was with them. Already Spain had gone over to the enemy and sent Joseph's forces scurrying to the frontier and finally across it. New names began to be quoted. Every one was speaking of Dresden. A great victory. Was it great enough to be depicted in engravings and added to the collection that ornamented the walls of Pont! Then followed quickly Leipsic. Defeat, retreat, disaster. The mournful tidings, though, brought an element of comfort in their wake. A letter from Louis said he was ready to return to his brother's aid. Another from Lucien said he would leave his retreat in England and come at once to France if the Emperor needed him. Letizia slipped the letters in her bosom and smiled happily. In time of trouble they were showing themselves worthy and to be counted on. The clan once more united, they could face the coalition of the entire world. She wrote them to come at once. She would see that all petty differences were forgotten once she had them assembled about her.

But it was more and more difficult for her to learn the

truth from any one. Was the disaster at Leipsic as great as reported! Hands and shoulders were raised. Visits to different ministries resulted in nothing. Even the stupid Austrian woman reigning at St. Cloud and passing her days painting silly pictures, playing the piano, spending half an hour out of the twenty-four with her son, knew nothing definite. Letizia remembered the letter she had received from her several months ago which proved how little she knew of what was actually happening. It was after the battle of Bautzen, when the Emperor had been exposed during an entire day like a simple combatant to the fire of the enemy. Yet she had written: "My dear Maman—I have just received the news that the Emperor has gained a battle at Bautzen. He is quite well and was never for one moment in danger. I hope that this decisive battle will lead us toward peace and the return of the Emperor. I have many other things to tell you, my dear Maman, but I do not wish to delay an instant the pleasure of sending you these good tidings. I beg you will always believe in my tender attachment. Your very devoted daughter, Louise." If she had known so little of the real truth then, why expect her to know anything now! It was even worse at the Tuileries. That limping, defrocked priest was back there again, recalled in these days of uncertainty by the Emperor and once more ruling with his crafty smiles. She could not bring herself to go to him. She had always distrusted him. He had shown himself too much a part of that Faubourg St. Germain group to be worthy of confidence. Who could be sure that he was not intriguing with those worthless Bourbons who, rumor now had it, were hovering in the wake of the enemy! Her brother, still confined to Lyons, was too far away to consult. Besides, letters had arrived from him which showed plainly they had been opened and read. Couriers could no longer be trusted.

Only one resource was left her. Joseph had returned from Spain, defeated yet still calling himself King, and had retired to Mortfontaine, where he pretended to keep up a semblance of a court. His indifference to the crisis that was facing them drove her into heated questions. What did he mean by remaining there in idleness when the whole of Paris was saying the Emperor had been defeated and was being pursued to the gates of Paris!

Joseph smiled blandly at her anxiety. "What can I do, Maman! Napoleon will listen to no one. But for him I should still be reigning happily in Spain. He had a chance to make peace. He would not take it. Holland is gone. Also Spain. The British will never be content until they have crushed him. Jerome has had to fly from Westphalia. Still —Napoleon refuses to talk of peace. And yet—everything is crashing about him."

Letizia looked at her first-born with coldly burning eyes. His bland calm exasperated her. How could he be content to remain there surrounded by all those fawning German, Spanish, Italian courtiers who had followed him from Spain to live on his bounty! Did he not know they were all traitors! Was not every one proving himself a traitor these days! Did he not realize that, if the Emperor fell, they would all fall with him!

"I am not so sure of that, Maman. We have never had the same friends. It is well known that our sympathies have not always been entirely with him."

Letizia held up a warning hand. The old command rushed to her lips. "Silenzio, Joseph! If any one but I heard you speak such words they would have the right to call you traitor."

Joseph's smile vanished. "It is only that I am utterly weary, Maman. I have done my best to help him. He would not have it. He values nothing that does not emanate solely

from his own brain. You know that I am ready to give my life to help him—if that were any use. But it is not. Nothing is."

Letizia returned to Paris in ominous silence. Saveria, sitting beside her in the carriage, glanced at her pale face and burning eyes with a shiver of alarm. Any one could see that something serious was on hand. It has been years since she had seen the Signora look like this. It made her think of Corsica, those far-away days with Paoli, those campaigns with the Signor Carlo. The Signora had worn the same determined, set expression, her eyes had burned in the same masterful way when she was fighting for the freedom of her native land. It was exactly the expression the Emperor wore when he came to dinner with the family and things did not go to please him. Saveria nodded to herself and smiled. How like two chestnuts they were!

When Napoleon was again at the Tuileries Letizia waited many hours before it was possible to see him alone. The coldly smiling Talleyrand was with him both day and night. When she was finally admitted to his bureau she pulled the two letters from her bosom and laid them on the desk before him. She had counted on their bringing a look of joy into his eyes, as they had to hers. But she waited in vain for a change of expression. He tossed the letters aside as though the contents had hardly been understood. And it was many minutes before he spoke. Even then the question he put appeared to have no relation to the letters.

"How much do you know, Maman?"

The question startled her. Was he going to tell her of some new disaster! How dark his eyes were. Was it profound sorrow—or despair? "I feel that I know nothing. Your ministers seem to think that everything important should be hidden."

"I mean about Caroline and Murat."

Her face brightened. "I had a letter from Caroline only a week ago. She asked me to write her about the balls being given in Paris. Surely—they are both well!"

Napoleon's eyes bored into hers as if seeking to discover something she was hiding from him. "Did she tell you nothing of having signed a truce with England and entered into an alliance with Austria?"

"Caroline! Never! Murat—perhaps—but my own daughter——"

"And my own sister! Yes, she did it, Maman. She is much cleverer than Murat. Elisa, too. She has Fouché there with her now. You were right when you distrusted him. You are always right, Maman." He sank back in the chair and bowed his head on the desk.

Letizia stared before her with straining eyes. Caroline—Elisa—traitors! She would not believe it. There must be some mistake. This was a vile slander cooked up by the crafty Talleyrand. It was despicable of him to accept such calumny without proof.

Napoleon pushed a paper silently toward her. The record of events in Naples and Piombino were clearly stated. Letizia read the paper and rose unsteadily. "If this is true, I will never see either of them again!"

Napoleon stretched out his hand and clasped hers. "Do not worry, Maman. Rats always desert a sinking ship."

She stared about her in dumb pain. Words formed on her lips and were left unspoken. A sinking ship! He had spoken the words himself. "But," she cried out, "there are your brothers who wish to return to you!"

Napoleon shook his head. "It has been one of my gravest mistakes to have felt that I needed my brothers. My dynasty is safe without them. The Empress will suffice."

Letizia lifted her head quickly. What was he saying—the Empress! Was it possible he could believe there was any

help there! She must try to make him see the utter futility of such thoughts.

"Joseph—" she began haltingly.

Napoleon laughed harshly. "The head of the family! What use will he be? His only interests are furniture, houses, women. He likes to play blind man's buff with girls."

"No—no! You wrong him. I heard him say he would give his life to help you. And Louis——"

"Louis is only returning because he finds it uncomfortable to remain in a country at war with his brother."

"Lucien!"

Napoleon's lips twitched. "In England with my enemies."

"But ready to return to help you."

Napoleon stood up. Care, lassitude, discouragement lined his face. "You used to say to us, corraggio, Maman. Well —I am saying it now. Corraggio. Corraggio. We do not need the others. We can stand by ourselves. I alone represent the people. Do you think my words proud? I speak them because I have the courage that comes from knowing that I am right—and because France owes all her greatness to me."

A knock sounded on the door. Cambacérès entered. He made a low bow to Letizia and crossed to Napoleon.

"Sire—Blucher has crossed the Rhine."

Napoleon heard the words without making a movement. It was a full minute before he spoke. "The negotiations! What does Berthier report?"

"The ancient frontiers of France are the demands of the enemy."

Napoleon's laugh rang out loud and strong.

Letizia's hands went out in a pleading gesture. "My son —this is the time for peace."

He turned away from her. "This from my mother!"

She clasped her hands tightly and repeated: "This is the time for peace. What does it matter if it means loss of power! That is nothing. You have shown yourself the master of the world. They can never take that glory from you. I do not care how this ends provided you come out of it without any loss of honor. To fall is nothing when one falls nobly. It is only a disgrace when one falls in cowardice. There is no dishonor in making peace."

Her words apparently impressed Napoleon. He listened attentively. When she had finished he drew in a long breath. "Well—perhaps I shall make peace. But first—I shall smash this Blucher." He turned toward Cambacérès. "Send Talleyrand to me at once."

Letizia waited until they were alone. "Not that man. Any one but him. I do not trust him. It is common rumor that he is already in correspondence with the enemy—with the Emperor of Russia—with the Bourbons. Any one but him."

Napoleon held out his hands. "Who else is there, Maman?"

Letizia did not wait a second to reply. "One of your own family. One of us. Joseph."

Napoleon leaned against the desk with lowered eyes. It was a long time before he spoke. When he did his voice had a dull, unfamiliar sound to it. "Very well—send him to me. But at once. I shall leave immediately to stop this invasion. I will make him my lieutenant. He can be governor of Paris and counsellor to the Empress." He stopped and looked at Letizia with deeply brooding eyes. "Should he hesitate, tell him that if I fall——"

Letizia grasped his hands and pressed them to her cheeks. "Silenzio! Do not speak such words! They are not worthy of you." Then she left hurriedly. No time must be lost in following up the victory she had won.

It was stimulating to be once more in the current of

events. Napoleon had departed to stop the onrush of the enemy, leaving Marie Louise as regent. The ceremony, which took place at the Elysée in the presence of the entire cabinet, appeared to Letizia one of those futile steps which were a mere loss of time. She listened to the reading of the decree with hardly suppressed disdain. What could this woman who played the piano, embroidered tapestries, and painted silly pictures do in a moment of crisis! Yet the Emperor apparently had confidence in her. The words of the decree rang out solemnly and the oath was taken—an oath obliging the regent to fulfil the triple mission of good mother, good wife, good French citizen and, according to the laws of the constitution, wield her powers in accordance with the wishes of her husband. After this was concluded, another ceremony was held in the hall of the Marshals. There, carrying his son in his arms, Napoleon appeared before the National Guard to bid them farewell. His last words had fallen upon a strangely silent assembly. "I am intrusting to you the dearest of my possessions—my son. You are answerable."

Each morning Letizia went regularly to Notre Dame. How different the services were! Formerly they had been Te Deums of victory. Now they were prayers offered for the success of the Grand Army. Cardinal Maury had ordered the prayers of forty hours. A pilgrimage was made to the shrine of Ste. Géneviève, where the relics of the saint were exposed to the throngs that filled the church. Here Letizia knelt with Saveria through many hours, praying no longer for victory but for peace. The word rang constantly in her ears now. She had seen enough of victories. None of them had brought peace. The moment had now come when peace seemed to her to be hovering closer. It must be seized and clung to. It would be the salvation of them all. She longed to make the journey out to Fontainebleau and throw

herself on her knees before the Holy Father—still a prisoner there—and beseech him to add his prayers to hers. Only the realization that such a step would be interpreted as showing infidelity to her son kept her from going.

Part of the day she spent at the Luxembourg Palace, where Joseph had installed himself as lieutenant-general of the Emperor and commander of the National Guard. She had at last shaken him out of the apathy which she had found so distressing at Mortfontaine; but it was still necessary for her to scout constantly his conviction that Paris was in danger. "What is there to fear when we have the army and the genius of the Emperor between us and the enemy!" Joseph had no such steadying trust. Organized Europe was against them now. The spirit of the French people had been broken. As for the defense of Paris, which was now in his hands, what had he to count on! Twelve legions of the National Guard; some companies of cannoniers made up of students from the Polytechnic School of the Invalides; untrained line troops; negligible artillery. He began hurriedly to issue orders. Barriers must be built at once at the most exposed points surrounding the city. But, more important still, was keeping an eye on the political situation. Reports must be got off constantly to the Emperor; reassuring letters must be despatched to the Empress. Each morning Letizia found him increasingly depressed and harassed. "All the news is disastrous. Murat has invaded Tuscany. Elisa has thrown in her lot with him. Eugene has been pushed toward the northern frontier. Disorder is everywhere—even here in Paris. A detachment of soldiers arrived yesterday, expecting to be sent forward to the front this morning. No one took it upon himself to see that they had lodgings or food. The military police are completely disorganized. I have just heard that the agents of the Bourbons fed these soldiers and advised them not to go

to the front—that everything was lost. Sedition is about us on all sides."

"He must make peace," Letizia repeated again and again. "Write him that. Insist upon it. Tell him we all demand it."

"As well write him to send his son to Austria."

News of victories at Montmirail, Vauchamp, Montereau changed apathy into cheerfulness. There was still hope. Letizia urged Joseph into greater activity. She insisted that he show more initiative and not wait for orders from Napoleon. He must build up the resources of defense, find more arms, arrest deserters, chastise with stern measures those who were lacking in patriotism. She was once more active and alert. Days were spent in rushing from one place to another. She sent for Jerome to come and live in her house. He and Catherine and Louis were now under the same roof with her. Her reception-rooms were constantly open to callers. No effort was too great for her. Joseph and Cambacérès discussed matters frankly with her, even sought her advice.

"If the Emperor should suffer reverses and the Empress leave Paris, would not the whole mass of intriguers immediately form a treacherous movement?" Cambacérès nodded silently. "Then on no condition must she be allowed to leave. Her departure would cast the people of Paris into despair. It would mean turning the government over to the enemy—to the Bourbons. She shall not leave."

"But, Maman, here is a letter I have just received from Napoleon." Joseph read the missive. " 'I order you, for the protection of the Empress and the King of Rome, to take the following steps. If, due to circumstances which I cannot foresee, I retreat to the Loire I should not want them too far from me, as I feel certain of the possibility of both being carried off to Vienna. If I should lose a battle or news of my death should reach you, order the Empress to leave

at once for Rambouillet. Do not under any circumstances let them fall into the hands of the enemy. I should prefer that they strangle my son rather than see him brought up in Vienna as an Austrian prince. I have a high enough opinion of the Empress to feel that she shares this opinion —as a mother and wife should. To leave her in Paris with the enemy would be to betray her.' "

Letizia bowed her head, but not with assent. "All this would not be necessary if he would only make peace." Her lips hardened with determination. "I wrote him only last week that real glory is to conserve what he can of his subjects and his country; that to risk a precious life to too evident danger is a form of cowardice, as it brings no advantage to the mass of men who have attached their existence to his."

Cambacérès nodded approvingly. "His most devoted friends all feel that with peace he would soon find in the resources of his genius and in the confidence of the nation a means of re-establishing our country."

"Ah—if we could only make him sacrifice his pride for the sake of his people!"

"Should the situation become tragic and I be forced to leave with the Empress—as he orders me," Joseph said, after a long silence, "there will be an interval between the departure of the Empress and the entrance of the enemy. At this time there should be one of us at the head of the provisional government."

Letizia turned quickly to Louis. "My son—this place must be filled by you."

Louis shrank farther back in his comfortable chair. "I am not well enough to assume such responsibility. Besides, I, as you, can see only peace as the salvation of us all."

Letizia's eyes flashed. "That is all well enough, Luigi. We are not speaking of peace now. We are planning to leave

some one in Joseph's place. It is not a question of your health or your preferences. It is your duty." She turned to Joseph. "Write this to Napolione. Tell him I suggest it."

The reply from the Emperor was discouraging. He would not consider the suggestion. Louis had invariably shown himself disposed toward false judgment. It would be much better, even safer, for him to leave Paris with Joseph.

Letizia's second choice was Jerome. Though only twenty-five he had had considerable military experience. He had been through the disastrous Russian campaign; and though Napoleon had found him wanting in discretion, he could not deny that he had shown himself brave and dashing. And he offered no excuses, as Louis had done. He was ready, he said, to take any position that Napoleon considered would be helpful. This willingness, however, brought no favorable response from Napoleon. If Jerome would dismiss all the courtiers he had brought with him from Westphalia, forget that he had been king, put on the uniform of a grenadier of the Imperial Guard, and come in this quality to headquarters, he would receive him and send him to Lyons to act as commandant of that city.

Jerome received the command with unconcealed anger. Dismiss his court, give up his title of king, return to the ranks of the army—what was Napoleon thinking of! He wanted to disgrace them all before the world. No—he would do nothing of the sort. He would return to Stains, where he had just bought a beautiful property. Napoleon was no longer the emperor of the universe—nor the second Charlemagne.

"He is still France, my son." Letizia's words became harsh and biting as her sons showed themselves selfish and incompetent in these moments of crisis.

Each day brought news of the advancing army. The enemy had entered far into France. Word from the north

brought details of their depredations. They were drawing nearer and nearer Paris. They had completely destroyed the château of Pont. It had been burned and pillaged—furniture, tapestries, portraits had all been ruthlessly made into a great bonfire—at the command of the Prince of Wurtemburg.

"My brother!" Catherine cried in despair, throwing herself at Letizia's feet. "You will never forgive me."

Letizia gathered her up into her arms. "Why weep! It does not matter." She smiled calmly. "He will be made to pay for every sou of damage done." She turned away quietly and went to her room. For a little while she looked back into the past and thought of that night in Corsica when she had fled with her children to the mountains overlooking Ajaccio. Flames had announced the destruction of her home. "What does it matter. We shall build it again—much more beautiful—when we return!" she had cried. Now no such thought entered her mind. Pont had never represented what the house at Ajaccio had. She had never been happy there. The years it had sheltered her had been filled with empty glory. Its loss meant nothing to her.

Once more cheerful tidings reached Paris. The Emperor had been victorious at Craonne. To add to Letizia's intense relief—surely a blessed omen!—Joseph told her orders had come from headquarters to release the Pope and facilitate his departure for Rome. She felt this was the first step toward peace. Others must now follow in quick succession. "Write to him again, Joseph. Make him see that peace will restore France to her old position in the world—a position that was honorable and secure. Convince him that there is nothing dishonorable in accepting the terms offered him. Tell him that each day is important; that misery has reached its crisis here; that the patriotism of the people cannot endure longer under such stress; that there is no

health in anything but peace." Peace. Peace. Peace. The word burned before her through restless days and nights.

The roar of cannon was now heard on the outskirts of the city. The enemy had reached the heights of Montmartre. The Emperor! The Grand Army! Where were they! Cut off from communication with Paris while attempting to attack the enemy in the rear.

"There is no longer any hope, Maman," Joseph announced. "I have just received a message from Napoleon. He orders me to take the Empress and his son away. We must all leave. I have made arrangements for you and Louis to leave for Chartres this evening."

Letizia thought quickly. "If the Empress abandons her place I shall remain in it. One of us must be in the Tuileries. If there is no one else there I shall go there."

"But what can you do alone, Maman! This is mere foolhardiness."

"At least I can remain there until my son returns."

"He will not return to Paris now. He cannot. It would mean giving himself up as a prisoner. There is still a chance for him to save himself."

"How?"

"I do not know. That will come later. But do not let us waste time in futile discussion. Where is Saveria? Let me call her. Have everything that you wish to carry with you packed at once. Urge Louis to be ready. As for Jerome—he and Catherine should also leave at once. Paris is no longer a place for a Bonaparte."

Letizia did not move. "If my brother were only here he would remain with me."

Joseph found her attitude stubborn. Louis added his pleas. He was ready to leave with her at once. He had no desire to fall into the hands of Alexander of Russia and the pack of Bourbons who were following on his trail. They

would all be imprisoned and subjected to outrage. It was better to escape while there was time.

Letizia left them discussing the question and hurried to the Tuileries. She found Marie Louise surrounded by the council. Immediate departure had been decided upon. The Empress was distraught and tearful. The faces of her counsellors offered no hope.

"You are running away!" Letizia demanded coldly.

"The Emperor has ordered it. I must obey him. You must come with me."

Letizia turned away and found herself facing Hortense. It was months since they had met. From the very first Letizia had felt admiration for Louis' wife. Even during the years of misunderstandings and family quarrels she continued to think of her as efficient and worthy of respect. At this moment she seemed the only one in the whole gathering who still maintained a shred of dignity. She could not resist asking her a question. "Are you running away, too?"

Hortense met her harsh glance quietly. "No. I have no intention of being captured along the road. I shall remain here in Paris." Her head lifted. "I am not a Bonaparte. I have nothing to fear." She turned to Cambacérès. "But I have advised my mother to leave Malmaison. If Paris is besieged it is better for her to be in her château in Normandy."

"Paris is already besieged," stated Cambacérès. "Have you not heard the cannon! There are only a few hours left to escape."

Everything was in wild excitement. The Empress was leaving immediately—her destination Rambouillet. Joseph would join her there the next day. Letizia sat aloof and silent while the hurried preparations continued. When the group descended the staircase, pale-faced, trembling, carelessly arrayed for the journey, she struggled out of her

From a photograph by Alinari.

Marie Louise and the King of Rome.

From the painting by Gérard.

apathy to bid them farewell. Only one moment of pride was vouchsafed her. The child, the King of Rome, was protesting violently at being carried off before his father returned. Even the Montesquiou was powerless to quiet his cries.

"He does not wish to leave," she said to Letizia.

Letizia held the child tight to her breast. "Of course he does not. He is his father's child."

When she returned to her house she found Louis ready for the journey. Jerome and Catherine had already departed. The sound of cannon on the heights of Montmartre were now nearer and nearer. Still she remained immovable in her determination not to leave. Only a last command from Napoleon, brought to her that evening by Joseph, weakened her. "My mother should leave at once and join Pauline at Nice. I have written her brother to leave Lyons and make the journey with her."

Late that night she took her place in the carriage that made up the long train drawn up before the door. Saveria followed and sat opposite her. Neither spoke as the carriage rattled along the deserted streets of Paris and finally reached the gates. Once Letizia looked back. The city was black under the pall of night. Before her the road was indistinguishable—like the future. She sank back and covered her face with her hands. It was all so exactly what she had known would be the end of too much glory. Defeat, failure, flight.

The fugitives had arrived at Blois; Letizia and Louis first; then Marie Louise, the King of Rome, and their group of followers; finally Joseph and Julie and Jerome and Catherine. The little town awoke from its lethargy of centuries to shelter the court of the crumbling Empire.

The flight from Paris had left Letizia exhausted in both mind and body. She hardly spoke to those about her. Even

when Jerome came into her room, took a seat beside her and held her hand, she only lifted her head long enough to ask if there were any tidings of Napoleon. Jerome's miserable expression was enough answer without any words. "They must have taken him prisoner; otherwise we should surely have heard from him by this time."

"They will never take him prisoner. That is not to be his fate. He will die with his sword in his hand."

Jerome stroked her hand gently. Better let her find what comfort she could in such thoughts. His glance followed hers to the mounting façade of the castle of Henri II. "Another mother of kings once lived there," he said, in an attempt to distract her thoughts. Then he added lightly: "And one that neither learned to read or write French. Historians tell us that Catherine de Médicis only spoke her own language."

Letizia hardly heard the words. Her strained, dry eyes gazed steadily before her. "Napolione! Napolione!" she murmured softly to herself. "Why is it we are not with you instead of running away like cowards! Will you ever forgive me!"

"But, Maman—he ordered you to leave. He did not want any of us to remain there."

"He was thinking of what was best for us—not of himself. But we should have thought of him. As soon as I know where he is I shall go to him. Have I not always been beside the one of you that was in trouble!"

Joseph came in hurriedly. At last a courier had arrived from Paris. The enemy had entered the city. A proclamation had already been issued by the Czar Alexander. Joseph read it with unsteady voice. " 'The allies will no longer treat with Napoleon Bonaparte or any member of his family. The allied sovereigns therefore invite the Senate to designate a government which will have the power to cre-

ate an administration and prepare a constitution that will be acceptable to the French people.' "

"But Napolione! Where is he?"

"They say he is at Fontainebleau, Maman."

Letizia started. "A prisoner!"

"Hardly that—yet. He must have a fair amount of soldiers with him still. The Old Guard will surely remain faithful."

Letizia struggled to her feet. "I will go to him at once."

"You, Maman—that is impossible!"

"Nothing is impossible when one is determined. If ever he needed me, it is now. Alone! Deserted by his wife! His child torn from him! His brothers flying like traitors! Nothing will stop me. I must go now."

"But, Maman, he does not want you there. He does not want any of us. We should only be a burden to him. Much better to wait here until we know the outcome. There will be negotiations with the new government in Paris—with the allied sovereigns. What could you do there! Besides, the roads are barred. The enemy has even been seen near here. Your place, ours, is to remain with the Empress and her son. Wait at least until we hear from Napoleon. I have sent couriers to him. They should return to-morrow with some word from him."

"To-morrow may be too late."

Cardinal Fesch suddenly appeared in their midst, travel-stained, exhausted, distraught from his flight from Lyons. Letizia threw herself into his arms as though a harbor of safety had at last been reached. But even he was no longer the calm, steadfast protector she had always counted on. His haggard face spoke eloquently of fear and low morale. He had barely escaped a detachment of Austrians sent to capture him. He had found refuge with a clerical friend at Montpellier. Hearing there of the capitu-

lation of Paris and the flight of the family, he had taken all risks to find his sister. On the road he had come across a triumphal procession—the Pope returning to Rome. He had solicited an audience and had been invited by the Holy Father to come immediately to Rome with his sister. He had quickly decided that no better refuge for them could be found at such a disastrous moment and had gratefully accepted the invitation. Stopping at Orleans on the way he had obtained passports for both of them. He had them with him now. They could leave at once; the sooner the better.

Letizia listened in amazement. For a moment tears swam in her eyes. "Is it possible that he can still think kindly of any of us! It is not human.'

"The Holy Father is far above human passions. He even asked me to deliver a message to the Emperor. 'Assure the Emperor that I am not his enemy. Religion does not permit that. I love France and when I am once more in Rome he will see that I shall do everything in my power to prove it.' And he sent his special blessing to you, sister, and said he would pray without ceasing that contentment should come to you in the eternal city."

Tears trickled down Letizia's cheeks. For the first time in weeks a shaft of light seemed to shine upon her. "We shall go to him when Napolione no longer needs me. But first—I must go to Fontainebleau."

"You go to Fontainebleau!" The Cardinal held up protesting hands. "That would mean disaster, capture, detention, probably imprisonment." His face expressed complete horror. "They would like nothing better than to heap indignities upon the Emperor's mother."

"What does that matter! A mother can stand them as well as her son. My place is beside him."

Joseph, seeing her determination was not to be shaken, quickly determined upon a step that influenced her. If she would wait a few days at Blois, he would take the desperate risk of going himself to Fontainebleau. It was necessary for him to see the Emperor, discuss everything with him, find out what was to be expected, take steps for the preservation of their properties, make plans for the future. "And if he wishes you there, Maman, I will send a detachment of soldiers to fetch you and the Empress."

The light in Letizia's eyes faded. "She will not go. If she had loved him she would never have let you force her to leave. She is a woman without knowledge of devotion and duty."

That night, having gained her promise, Joseph departed. The next morning he was back again. The roads were barred by allied soldiers. He had barely escaped capture by a band of Cossacks. Quickly following his return came Galbois and the Duc de Bassano—both straight from Fontainebleau. They brought orders from the Emperor and a communication that must be read to the assembled family. The fatal document was read during a deathlike silence. The Emperor had signed his abdication. He was to receive the island of Elba as his kingdom, be allowed to retain his title of Emperor, permitted to take with him a guard of four hundred men, and be paid an annual income of two million francs. "The allied powers having declared that Emperor Napoleon is the sole obstacle to the re-establishment of peace in Europe, the Emperor, faithful to his oath, declares that he renounces for himself and his heirs the thrones of France and Italy, and that there is no sacrifice, not even that of his life, which he is not ready to make for the interests of France." Then followed special instructions for the family. None of them must remain long at Blois.

Jerome should go to Brittany. His mother would do best to join Pauline at Nice. Julie and her children should return to Marseille. Louis, who had always loved the south, might reside in Montpellier. The strictest economy was recommended to each one. The letter to his wife was read aloud by Marie Louise, the sentences punctuated by sobs. After telling her of his demand that, besides being made Duchess of Parma, she should be given a strip of Tuscany which would bring her nearer to Elba and thus make it easy for her to come to him, he ended with: "Farewell, my good Louise. You can rest assured of the courage, the tranquillity, and the affection of your husband. A kiss for the little king."

Letizia hardly heard the words, the exclamations, the explosions of anger, the sobs of those about her. What did it matter what Jerome thought of being confined to a tiny island in the Mediterranean! Or that Joseph should be only occupied with obtaining passports with which to fly to some other country before he was forced to accompany his fallen brother into exile! Or that Catherine should be planning to send off a courier to her father to intercede with the Czar for her and Jerome! Or that Julie should state placidly that she would return to Mortfontaine through the lines of the enemy! Or that Marie Louise should sob futilely over last words! One phrase in that fatal document had caught her attention and blotted out everything else. One word. Elba. The one word had conjured up a brilliant vision. Her lips curved slowly into a smile. Her eyes brightened. She put out her hand and clasped Saveria's. Already she felt herself surrounded by olive-groves; she could breathe the spicy scent of oranges; she saw high mountains bathed in glorious sunlight; about her was the gentle plash of deep blue water. And Corsica was just there, within sight, almost

within touching distance. And her son beside her, freed from all dangers, safe, calm, protected. No more wild alarms, no more roll of drums, no more blasts of trumpets, no more belching cannon. Only peace, contentment, tranquillity. Everything that she had so long prayed for. The Madonna had not forgotten her. Her prayers were at last to be granted.

She rose without being noticed by the others and, going softly to her room, knelt down in a prayer of thanksgiving. There Saveria found her hours later to announce the imminent departure of the Empress. Already the street was filled with carriages and soldiers. The aide-de-camp of the Czar had arrived to put himself at the commands of the Empress and conduct her to the protecting arms of her father.

Marie Louise soon entered the room. "My father wishes me to return with him to Austria. There seems nothing else for me to do. At least there my son and I shall be protected from all dangers. I have come to ask you to go with me. I can assure you of a most cordial welcome from my father."

Letizia listened calmly. It was all so exactly what she had expected of this woman.

"Your presence there will make me very happy," Marie Louise continued. "I beseech you to come with me."

Finally Letizia spoke. "I shall never separate myself from my children. When one loves as I do, one rushes to those in trouble. One does not run away from them."

Marie Louise covered her face with her hands. "You blame me. But I can see nothing else to do." She drew timidly nearer to Letizia and kissed her on both cheeks. It was like kissing a marble statue. "You have always shown affection for me. It would be a great comfort to know that you always will."

Letizia returned the embrace with obvious compunction. "That will depend upon you and your conduct in the future."

"But you—what will you do? Where will you go?"

Once more the light was burning steadily in Letizia's eyes. "There is only one place for me. I shall go to Elba with my son."

BOOK VI

I

His Britannic Majesty's warship the *Grasshopper* floated quietly out of the harbor of Leghorn and turned its prow toward a dim gray spot that glowed on the distant horizon. The day was bright and windless; the Mediterranean calm and blue; the abrupt chain of Carrara Mountains sparkling like snowpeaks in the dazzling sunlight. Sir Neil Campbell, appointed by the British Government as commissioner of the island of Elba, was giving much attention to the placing of chairs and rugs at the forward part of the deck. He wished his distinguished passenger to be made as comfortable as possible. He had called upon her the night before. His efforts to make the crossing as pleasant as possible were the result of the impression made upon him—an impression already recorded in his journal.

"July 25–28. Landed at Leghorn to await Madame Mère.

"July 29. Madame Mère and her suite arrived in two carriages, each drawn by six horses. She came from Rome and travelled under the name of Madame Dupont, accompanied by her chamberlain, Signor Colonna, and a lady in waiting, Madame Saveria.

"July 30. Received a visit from Colonna, who requested passage for Madame Mère on a British warship. He stated her reason for making this request was due to the fact that the ship sent by Napoleon had not arrived and that she greatly feared the crossing on other than a warship on account of rumors to the effect that the Mediterranean was infested at this time by Algerian pirates. I informed Colonna that I would speak to the captain attached to my mis-

sion, who acquiesced in the request. After thanking me, Colonna stated that Madame would be pleased to receive a visit from me. I told him I should call this evening.

"July 31. Called on Madame Mère in company with Captain Battersby of the *Grasshopper*. Upon our entrance she rose from her chair, greeted us and asked us to sit near her. I addressed the mother of Napoleon by the title of Madame and Highness. She was most gracious and entirely free of affectations. She talked to us a good deal about her children. Evidently it is the subject about which all her thoughts centre. She said she had once thought of visiting England. Her son Lucien had spoken most favorably of our country to her. She showed me a portrait of Louis, painted on the lid of a snuff-box she carried, and named the numerous books he had written. She referred to her eldest son as the King Joseph. She complained of the way the French Minister of the Interior had refused to give her the price she had demanded for her house in Paris. The old lady looks very well, is of medium height and carries herself with considerable dignity. After an hour of conversation we left. She will embark to-morrow morning and I shall accompany her to Elba."

Slipped between the pages of this journal, put there for safe-keeping and to be forwarded to his government, was a letter which had brought a frown of contemptuous disdain to the old officer's face—especially after he had made his formal call upon Napoleon's mother. It was from the Count of Stakenberg, an Austrian general, who expressed the alarm of his own and the French Government regarding the suspicious actions of Madame Mère. "You write that you have discussed with the captain of the marine the voyage of Madame Letizia to Elba. I have just received information that she passed Pisa yesterday, at seven o'clock in the evening, on the way to Leghorn. Much to my disapproval and

without my knowledge, she was provided here with an escort of four hussars. I hope you will let me know at once if it is with your authorization, or that of the Austrian Minister in Rome, that she has gone to Leghorn and if you intend to take her to Elba. I shall await your reply before taking any steps. It will be impossible to permit her to remain long at Leghorn, especially with her suite. The situation is fraught with grave danger for us all."

Colonel Campbell surveyed the arrangements he had made on deck with satisfaction. For a small warship, it was not bad. He hoped the dinner he had ordered would turn out well. Those suspicious Austrians be hanged. One had only to see the mother of those Bonapartes—he was about to call them infamous—once to know that she had no part in the intrigues of her notorious children. It was a pity some of them didn't take after her. Her dignity had appealed to the old Scotchman. He had immediately felt the power in her. Perhaps it was that which had carried the notorious children so far. But it had not lasted with them. It surely would with her. At any rate he was looking forward with much interest to this day on the ship with her. It would be something to tell his grandchildren about—if he ever got back to England alive.

He hurried forward as he saw a party approaching the dock. Colonna, head uncovered, hat carried in hand, walked ahead with Letizia's hand on his arm. Behind them Saveria followed closely, her eyes shifting from ship to sea with obvious glances of fear and alarm. Then came Captain Battersby and two officers.

"We have tried to make you as comfortable as possible, Madame," Campbell said with his best manner. "I was told you dreaded the crossing on account of rumors of Algerian pirates. I assure you, on a British warship, you need have no fear."

Letizia settled herself comfortably in the chair and looked at this man who, though of alien race, was showing himself so attentive, even courteous—almost as much so as if he had been Latin. His frank Scotch face pleased her. She nodded, thanked him, then smiled. "Do you think there is anything left for me to fear, Monsieur?"

Campbell answered her courageous smile. He liked her even more than he had the night before. "At any rate, Madame, the crossing will not be long." He bowed with the intention of taking leave. A gesture from Letizia detained him.

"They tell me you escorted the Emperor from France to Elba. Tell me about it. How was he? Did he look well? I have not seen him for months—not since before his abdication. Did he seem well?"

Campbell was delighted to describe that memorable journey from Fréjus, on the southern coast of France, whence he had conducted the Emperor to his island kingdom. He had recounted it many times before—both in official despatches to his government and to avid listeners; but to tell it to the mother of the fallen ruler was an occasion he had not expected. Such a listener was inspiring. He cleared his throat and launched forth on details. The crossing had been without incident, so far as the sailing went. The trip was entirely peaceful. Only the silent, calm, extraordinary man who stood all day at the prow, refusing food, answering no one, hands clasped behind him in an attitude of profound meditation, had made the hours significant. Upon the arrival at Porto Ferrajo, the Emperor had been received with acclamations by the crowds lining the shore. He was at once presented by the mayor with the keys of the island; then, taking his place beneath a canopy, accompanied by the vicar-general, he had proceeded at once to the Duomo to render thanks for his safe arrival.

Letizia did not miss a word of the description. It was the first account she had heard of Napoleon's arrival at Elba. She nodded from time to time with satisfaction. Everything she heard seemed to please her. She saw a new life opening before her. It would be an existence in which her son would find peace and repose; and she too—through him. Her lips curved gently. Fruit and flowers instead of guns and sabres.

"Tell me what he has done since he has been there."

Campbell did not miss the changed expression, the evidence of great relief. The night before, her face had been grave and melancholy; Now there was a new light in her eyes; one of expectancy, almost joyful anticipation. His liking for her deepened. Evidently she possessed a quality of adaptation to new circumstances that was amazing. To retire from an empire that had extended only a few months before from Lübeck to Cadiz would have left almost any one broken and discouraged, according to the Scotchman's way of thinking. But these Bonapartes—never! He had seen the son take defeat calmly. He was now seeing the mother accept it as almost something to be desired. Those Bonapartes! They were as proud and self-sufficient, held their heads as high, as if they still ruled the world. Were they really beaten! Would they ever be!

"Without doubt, Madame," he began after a short pause, "Elba is a small, narrow island. It is not nearly so large as Corsica. But, thanks to mines, it is much richer. Since the most ancient days the inhabitants have had only to scratch the ground to draw riches from it."

Letizia's eyes lighted. "Then you think investments there would prove profitable?"

"Undoubtedly. But, by the treaty of Fontainebleau, it now belongs entirely to the Emperor."

"The treaty of Fontainebleau!" Letizia's lips curved with

scorn. "I hope my son will not put too much faith in that. I have no confidence in the promises of those worthless Bourbons. They will not trouble themselves to see that the treaty is carried out." Then, as if the subject were not worth considering: "What place has the Emperor chosen to live in?"

"At first he appeared more interested in restoring the fortifications of the island than in choosing a residence."

Letizia nodded. "Of course; that is his métier. But surely there are some comfortable houses."

"He has chosen the palace of the Mulini. It is neither a Tuileries nor a St. Cloud."

"I am glad of that. I detested both places."

"But it is not so bad. There are vast rooms. I believe he has chosen another house at Porto Longo. They say he is much occupied now in arranging rooms for the arrival of the Empress."

Letizia looked at him searchingly. "The Empress! Is she expected soon?"

"It is common rumor that the Emperor expects her at almost any time."

Letizia made no comment. A little later she asked: "And do you know where he has arranged for me to live?"

"In the Maison Vantini—quite beside his palace."

"Ah!"

The sigh was one of contentment; and with it came such an unmistakable expression of withdrawal from immediate surroundings that Campbell took his leave with a barely perceptible gesture from Letizia.

She settled back in the comfortable chair and gazed fixedly across the calm blue sea. Saveria placed a rug across her knees and sat down a little way from her on a bale of cloth. Colonna, who had up to this time stood at attention, head still uncovered, found the moment propitious to retire to another part of the boat.

Letizia was not looking ahead. She was reviewing the past few months that had succeeded her flight from Paris. How different the journey had been from the one when she had gone to join Lucien! This last one had been filled with constant uncertainties; sometimes with demonstrations of unfriendliness that had caused alarm. Only when she and her brother had reached Rome had she drawn a quiet breath. Even then she had felt no real peace until she had once more climbed the steps of the Quirinal and knelt before the Supreme Pontiff. Once more ineffable calm swept over her. Comforting words brought a torrent of tears to her eyes. Such kindness from the one who had been driven from his possessions, forced to leave his own country, made a prisoner in a foreign land, subjected to insults, threats, mental tortures—all through the ambitious demands of her son—was more than she could accept or believe. And yet he had only sympathy and welcome for her. He told her she should make Rome her home as long as she was happy there; that she was his most beloved guest; that she was under his protection at all times.

In the spacious rooms of the Palazzo Falconiere she at last gave herself over to rest and plans for the future. But there was little repose possible. There was so much to think of, so many letters to read, so many business affairs to be decided with her brother. These last she felt more important than anything else now that the crumbling fortunes of her children left her their sole haven of refuge. To think that she had ever doubted their need of her!

The arrival of Lucien scattered all other thoughts to the winds. After ten years of separation she once more held him tight against her breast. Ah, the joy, the undreamed-of joy! Her beloved Lucien! Her best beloved. She would mount the Scala Santa that very day—all the way on her poor old knees—and render thanks to the Madonna for his

return. She must examine each of his features, touch them, kiss them. He had not aged at all. The long sojourn in England had treated him well. He was as beautiful as ever, as oratorical, as enthusiastic, as filled with schemes—and with all those blessed gestures she loved so. Even that familiar trick of half closing the lids over his myopic eyes brought her inexpressible joy. And what a comfort his attitude toward the Holy Father was! Unlike the others, he showed profound appreciation of what the Pope had done for them. He went straight from her to kneel before the Papal throne, receive the title of Prince of Canino, and present the Holy Father with a copy of his now completed poem, *Charlemagne*, which had just been published in three languages —English, French, Italian. On the first page was a dedication to the Father of Christendom. He was fêted by every one. Even the Princess of Wales, then travelling in Italy, had shown him marked attention. Ah, but he was a great poet, a great orator, a great politician! If he had only been beside Napoleon during the days of disaster—as he had been that eighteenth of Brumaire—he would have surely found some way out of the defeat more honorable than ignoble exile to a remote island. How different he was from all the others! How different from Joseph, now in refuge on the Lake of Geneva; from Louis, miserable over the lawsuit in which he was trying to wrest his sons from Hortense in order to bring them up as Bonapartes rather than Beauharnais; from Jerome, seeking favors from his wife's relatives, enemies who had vanquished his brother; from Elisa, whose misfortunes had sent her wandering about without a home; from Caroline, turned traitor with Murat!

It was only after weeks that she could force herself to return to affairs of the moment. First, there was the house she had forsaken in Paris. Word had reached her that the Bourbons wished to buy it for a ministry of war. Va bene,

From a photograph by Alinari.

Marie Caroline Bonaparte, Queen of Naples.

From the painting by Madame Le Brun.

if they wished it, they should be made to pay through the nose. Many letters passed between Paris and Rome. Cardinal Fesch showed himself still the man of affairs that had made him a fortune. At last it was agreed to accept a price fixed by experts and the house was sold for a million francs —four hundred thousand more than she had paid Lucien for it. This did not include the furniture. She would not part with that at any price—at least not all of it. Some of it would do for the palace she intended to buy in Rome; and some of it would do for the home Napolione had chosen for her in Elba. When the payment was made and she found herself in possession of another million francs she experienced intense satisfaction. Help was now needed in every quarter. Already she was being called upon to disperse what she had spent so many years in saving. Her children wrote and came to her for help and found her bountiful. Yet people had called her stingy! Let them call her what they pleased. At least they would never again be able to say the Bonapartes were beggars.

When Pauline finally arrived from Nice—pale, emaciated, but still lovely, perhaps more so now that an ethereal quality had softened her radiant beauty—and announced that she was going to accompany her to Elba, her joy was unbounded.

"It is the least we can do, Maman. You and I did not love Napoleon because he was emperor—as the others did. We loved him because he was ours—your son, my brother. We are the only ones who remain faithful to him. We shall until death—even after. Let us go to him as quickly as possible. He needs us. That stupid, dull, faithless Marie Louise has no intention of ever joining him. She is now at Aix taking a cure and amusing herself with an Austrian officer named Nieppert. They say he is already her lover. I am beginning to think the old woman was a better wife—even if she was

a cocotte. Cocottes always give a certain amount of satisfaction. They play the game. And I don't blame her much for trying to save her neck when the Allies entered Paris. Napoleon forsook her first. You have heard how she and Hortense threw themselves into the arms of the Czar when he reached Paris. They could not do enough for him. Hortense was clever enough to have herself made Duchesse de St. Leu. Even Laure Junot lifted her heavy crape sufficiently to smile upon him. Of course it was all self-preservation. But the créole risked too much. Decked in rose tulle, she paraded round the gardens of Malmaison with the conquering kings until she caught her death of cold—and died the evening she had planned to give them a gala dinner. They say she left enormous debts which Napoleon will have to pay. I wonder how he will take her death. I shall always believe he loved her more than any of us. You think so too; don't you, Maman! It just goes to prove that all men want of us is our bodies. How do you think I look thin? Duchand says I am much more beautiful this way—that my lines are more classic. Even though a bag of bones they all seem to love me still. When I have time I must tell you about the visit Cardinal Pacca made me in Nice. I had an awful time getting rid of him. Deliver me from the red hats! I have just received an offer from the British Government for my house in the Elysées. They want it for an embassy. I wonder how big a price I can squeeze out of them. You must help me, Maman—you and Uncle Fesch. You two would get money from a turnip. I haven't the slightest idea how I am going to live. I actually haven't a penny left. You should have seen Napoleon the night he passed by Le Luc to see me. I was at the Château du Bouillidon—ill in bed. He arrived at night, disguised in a sort of masquerade costume —a mixture of every known uniform—and wearing a white cockade in his hat. I wouldn't let him kiss me until he had taken off the vile thing. It would have been funny if it

hadn't been so tragic. His journey down from Paris must have been too horrible. People who had kissed his hand a few weeks before threw stones at him, cursed him, tried to kill him. His life was actually saved at Avignon by a waitress who helped him to escape. I had no peace until I heard he was safely aboard a British warship. How are we ever to reach him? They say the Mediterranean is filled with Algerian pirates and Barbary corsairs. I have no intention of being captured and spending the rest of my life in an Arab's harem—even for Napoleon. Have you heard from Elisa? I hear she has another baby. And what has become of that tiresome wife of Lucien? Will she come to Rome? They say Lucien is having an affair with the Princess of Wales. I call that unpatriotic—Napoleon's enemy. If it's true I shan't speak to him. I wonder how Caroline and Murat are faring in Naples. What a tempest we have stirred up! And they say it is quite impossible to have dresses sent out from Paris. What shall I do! I am literally in rags."

Poveretta Paoletta! So thin, so really emaciated, and yet so full of *joie de vivre*. Letizia found herself laughing in spite of many moments of disapproval. But why cavil at Pauline when she made life so gay and bright? She was created to throw a glamour over existence, no matter how dreary it might become. It was a real sorrow to Letizia that this daughter was too frail to make the journey with her to Elba at the appointed time. Instead she had rushed off to the baths at Lucca. It would never do, she said, to go to Napoleon until she was feeling quite fit and strong. The object of her visit was to amuse him. An ailing woman would be only a bore. But she would come the moment she was strong.

"If you will permit me, Madame, to take you forward, you can now see the island distinctly."

Letizia forced the past from her thoughts, took Camp-

bell's arm and walked with him to the prow of the boat. Leaning against a cannon, she stood there while the misty form on the horizon grew more and more distinct. The breeze was now heavy with aromatic scents. She lifted her head and breathed deeply of the familiar perfume. Just over there lay Corsica. Corsica! How long ago that seemed! Her glance rested on it only a few minutes. It was empty of everything but memories. Elba was the magnet that drew her now.

The harbor of Porto Ferrajo lay before her. Colonel Campbell pointed out the house he said the Emperor was occupying. She leaned forward straining her eyes to see the place that was to be her new home. But more intently she scanned the crowd along the shore.

"Do you see him, Saveria? My eyes must be growing dim. I cannot make him out among so many people."

"He is not there, Signora. You would see him if he were."

At last the ship cast anchor. A small craft put out from the port to meet the incoming vessel. There were men in uniform, but their faces were unfamiliar; the captain of the port, the mayor, several officials, generals Drouot and Bertrand, members of the Imperial Guard. They climbed the rope ladder, came forward, bowed respectfully and spoke florid words of welcome. Letizia barely heard them.

"The Emperor! My son!"

"He spent all of yesterday awaiting Your Imperial Highness. Giving up hope of your arrival to-day, he went off this morning to inspect a fortress in the mountains. But everything is in readiness for Your Highness's reception."

Letizia gave no sign of disappointment. With a gesture of acknowledgment to the bowing officers, she followed them silently ashore. A carriage drawn by six horses awaited her. The streets were lined with people. There was

a warm welcome in the dark, round, curious eyes. Cheers followed the progress of the carriage. She bowed from side to side. It was said that the Emperor's mother smiled most graciously. But the crowd never guessed that the smile was not for them. It was caused by the thought which had flashed into her mind when she was told that Napoleon was not there to greet her. How perfectly in character it was of him to go away to inspect a fortress instead of being there to meet his mother!

"Are you contented here?"

Letizia and Napoleon were sitting on the terrace of the Maison Vantini. In the cool of evening they were looking out over the stretch of placid blue sea. The house was close beside the Palazzo Mulini. The terrace had been added since his arrival, built under his supervision; it offered a superb view of town, harbor, and Mediterranean.

Before replying to her question, Napoleon rose and stood with his back to her. She had been studying his face intently all day, ever since he had returned from Monte Giove and thrown himself into her arms. He looked extraordinarily well, rested, calm. But she wanted to know what was going on behind those quiet, cool gray eyes—eyes that were usually slightly lifted above a direct gaze and so often gave the effect of dreaming.

When he turned back to her there was an almost peaceful expression on his face. How long it had been since she had seen him look so! "After my wife and son come I shall make myself contented. Ever since the siege of Toulon I have had to adapt myself to circumstances. You must have seen, as I mounted, that I have always done so naturally —without effort. My faculties grew in a way that made me feel they developed for the function that was necessary at the moment. Only once, for a few days at Fontainebleau,

did I ever think of giving up. To be forsaken by men I had made, those I thought were friends, was worse than any defeat. But it was only momentary discouragement. That is passed now. I am thinking only of a new life—one I have mapped out since I came here." A smile fluttered across his lips. "The life of a bourgeois gentleman, Metternich will no doubt call it. He says that is what I have always been, beneath everything else." He opened his arms with a welcoming gesture to the quiet evening. "Days of repose—days spent with my wife, my son, my mother. Sometimes I shall go to Parma—if Marie Louise wishes it. But here we shall have our little world, our own people, our friends. I shall rest my body and my soul. At forty-five a man is too old for wars. I shall find ways to make life bearable."

Letizia stirred uneasily. "Have you heard from the Empress?"

"I have sent several couriers to her with letters. Everything is arranged for her to come."

Letizia made no comment. From what Pauline had told her, it seemed these hopes for wife and child were doomed to failure. The thought of further disappointment, more evidences of faithlessness, brought sharp pain. Was life to be a path of endless desertions for him! Her eyes followed him wistfully as he continued to walk up and down the terrace, hands clasped behind him, head bowed forward. When he again stopped before her, the contented look was gone. Deep sorrow was in his eyes.

"You have heard, Maman, the sad tidings from Malmaison? Josephine is dead."

Letizia nodded and said nothing. Napoleon resumed his walk. Nothing more was ever said between them on that subject.

"Pauline is coming to us."

Again the smile flashed across his face. "That will make

me very happy. I love Pauline. I always have. Do you remember how I used to hold her in my arms when she was a baby! Even then she demanded all of one's attention. If she did not have it, she would scream until it was given her. And she has shown herself worthy of my love. The others—" He tossed his head contemptuously. "Ambitious—intriguing—selfish—faithless! We must prepare a great welcome for her. She shall have the apartment in the palace I have prepared for Marie Louise. She can occupy it until the Empress comes." He threw back his head with a boyish gesture. "The queen of caprice, as they called her in Paris, must be amused."

"If her presence here amuses you, she will be happy. She, as I, loves the one best who needs her most. Before she comes I must get this house arranged. I have had my things sent from Paris—my most precious things. The Bourbons wanted to buy them—accursed cattle. As if I would ever sell them my belongings!"

"What are your most precious things, Maman?"

"The tapestry you gave me of the Return of the Hero; that bust Canova made of you which Elisa sent me from Lucca; the portraits of the kings of Holland, Westphalia, Spain."

"Kings!" Napoleon turned away abruptly.

"I shall always call them kings. The world will, too. You will see, Nabulio. And I have ordered that set of chairs with the red brocade sent; you remember—they were in the salone."

"Any one would think you were installing yourself here for life, Maman."

Letizia started. "Am I not, figlio mio?"

There was something evasive in his eyes as he avoided her penetrating glance. "I was thinking of the economy you have so long urged us all to practise."

"There are times for economy—and for extravagance. You once told me my house should be worthy of an emperor's mother."

Saveria appeared on the terrace to wrap a shawl about Letizia's shoulder. It was no longer the wine-colored shawl of heavy wool; it was a magnificent affair of lustrous silk and heavy fringe.

Napoleon watched her silently. Something in her attitude of appreciation of the rich shawl made him smile slowly; also her attitude of devotion to his mother which had lasted through so many years of sunshine and tempest. "And you, my good Saveria, have you too forgotten the old days of Ajaccio and Marseille when we did not know where the next day's food was coming from! I used to think you were an incurable miser."

Saveria lifted her hands to heaven. "Grazie a dio—those days are ended! The Signora Madre has saved enough for everybody. There is no longer any reason to worry."

Letizia hardly gave herself a day to rest from the fatigue of the journey. She was impatient to see this island that was to be her son's and her future home. She drove each morning from point to point, inspected vineyards that climbed up the mountains, asked the price of property that caught her attention, visited the few charitable institutions that existed, made notes of improvements she intended to undertake herself, demanded long reports on the condition of the poor, and let it be known that she was planning to celebrate the festa of Assunzione in a way that would be memorable to the island people. She wanted every one from far and near to be present—especially old friends from Corsica. Was it not the Emperor's birthday! Should it not be as magnificently celebrated as in Paris! And when her furniture finally arrived from Paris and the rooms of the

Napoleon.

From the bust by Canova.

Maison Vantini were in order, she appointed Sunday for her reception day. After the morning levee in the Palazzo Mulini, there was another in her own house. Napoleon himself presented all the functionaries of the island, their wives, their children, their relatives, to her. She received them with a much warmer smile than had ever been on her lips during the days of the Empire. These people were much more to her liking. They were so much more her own—almost Corsican. She did not have to struggle with a foreign language to make them understand. And she did not have to choose her household from dukes and duchesses. Her chamberlain was Italian—Colonna. Her two ladies in waiting, Madame Blachier and Madame de Blou, though French, spoke Italian as if it were their own language. Her almoner, Abbé Buonavita, was wholly Corsican. For secretary, she chose a young woman by the name of Rosa Mellini, the daughter of a colonel of engineers who lived on the top floor of the house she occupied. She wrote French and Italian with equal facility, was quiet and efficient. Indeed, Letizia found her so sympathetic that she soon began to think of her as a daughter, had her made lady in waiting, and eventually shared with her the intimacy which for so many years had only been permitted to Saveria. The little court was quite perfect. Letizia smiled upon it benignly. When before had her daily life been so entirely free from bickerings and gossip! When before had she had the joy of dining every evening with her son! Not only dining with him, but playing reversi with him during the long peaceful evenings. And what a cheat he was at the game! She had to watch him carefully to see that he did not play some trick upon her. When she caught him she scolded him roundly, as she had in those far-away days of his youth. "Vergonia, Nabulio! You cannot deceive me as you did those worthless vagabonds you had about you in Paris. I may be growing

old, but I still have my wits about me." "You will never grow old, Maman. You will live longer than any of us."

At times, she found her love for her own people getting her into trouble. Hearing of her arrival, and of her bounties, Corsicans began to arrive in droves. The crossing was so short that the whole island seemed to have decided to come to her with pleas to be taken under her wing, be given remunerative places in her household, appointed administrators in her son's kingdom. At last she was forced to chide them harshly. "Every Corsican that does not know where to lay his head comes to me for a living. I cannot support all of you. I have my family to think of first." But her words were colder than her actions. She could not help loving them. They made her feel entirely Corsican once more. Habits, memories, accents, words of her early days returned to her like a dream that had been forgotten. At times she wondered if she had ever actually left Corsica.

Finally Pauline arrived, with a whole shipload of beautiful clothes—and some equally beautiful women whom she had invited to make the journey with her. Any one would have thought Titania had suddenly appeared with her entire court. In the twinkling of an eye the whole town of Porto Ferrajo took on a new aspect. Soldiers began to strut before the Palazzo Mulini and twirl their florid mustaches as if they were on dress parade. Uniforms were brushed and worn with a new chic. The theatre, unused for years, was cleaned and put in order. Word went forth that the Princess Borghese had brought a trunk full of French pieces and was going to direct performances herself, design the costumes, even play some of the rôles. There were to be balls and soirées and fêtes champêtres and fireworks on the water. Life in Elba was going to be as gay as in Paris. It was merely a question of inspiration. And what more inspiration could any one demand than the presence of the most beautiful princess the world had ever seen!

"I have come here to amuse Napoleon—and myself. Why mope just because our enemies are forcing us to live for a short time away from the centre of the universe!"

The light words disturbed Letizia. "A short time! What are you saying, Paoletta! We are to live here definitely."

"La, la—Maman! You don't believe that. You can't. Don't you know Napoleon better! Besides, Uncle Fesch told me he was buying a palace for you in Rome. Does that look as if you intended to remain here always! I'm sure you and Napoleon are plotting some sort of a return. Don't imagine you can hide things from me. The world knows it too. That is the reason we are all watched so carefully. I hardly dare write a love letter these days. It is sure to be opened and read aloud in some chancery. The way everything I did in Italy was spied upon was most amusing. But I found out how to get ahead of them. I made those put to watch me fall in love with me. Then they reported what I told them to."

"Paoletta mia, you are mad! Napoleon is planning nothing. Neither am I. You know I seek nothing but the happiness of my children. I am finished with empty glories."

"Still, Maman, you did like being called mother of kings; you know you did. And even if you are not plotting something, you might as well be doing it. The world believes it and expects it of you; it knows the Bonapartes cannot be kept down. At any rate, our duty for the present is to make Napoleon happy during these days of penance. I am going to try to obey him implicitly—for the first time in my life. I shall even try to remember his preferences in clothes and not wear either black or white. For some tiresome reason he seems to detest such combinations. Did you hear him the other night, when I appeared in black velvet à l'espagnole, ask me if I were going to dine in domino! And the next night, when I wore white, he said I was dressed like a

martyr ready for sacrifice. He insists that I wear no jewels. It would make these dowdy Elba women jealous. I have decided to courtesy to him just as I did at the Tuileries. It will show these people I respect him as much as when he sat on a throne. Of course it is going to be rather a bore—but I'm willing to go through with it for a while. Poor old Napoleon! There is not much for him to do here; is there!"

"What are you saying, Paoletta! He can be entirely happy here; and much more at peace than ever before."

"Chère Maman—is that not more what you wish than what you believe! I admit he is getting fat—horribly fat. But he is also dreaming as much as ever. Don't you see it in his eyes?"

"You mean of a return to power—to France?"

Pauline nodded with conviction. "If he could only get rid of the thought of that hideous Austrian woman and his child. He still believes they will come to him. Every one knows she has thrown him over forever. The child is to be brought up as an Austrian."

"Nabulio's son—never!"

"And still he goes on planning for her arrival here. It was thinking of her and her coming here that made him drive the Polish woman away."

"What Polish woman?"

"The Countess Walewska—the one he had the affair with at Schönbrun. Didn't he tell you she came here with her child—his son?"

Letizia's eyes grew severe. "It is another of the lies they tell of him."

"And he would only permit her to remain one day—and one night—all because he was afraid Marie Louise would hear of it. I believe she is the only woman that ever really loved him. What a pity he does not recognize real love when it exists and not always throw away his affection upon intriguing women!"

Letizia rose with mounting anger. "Shame on you for listening to such scandalous gossip!"

Pauline laughed lightly. "One learns so much from listening to gossip—especially what is being circulated about one's self. I never recognize myself from the stories they tell on me. And yet I am vastly amused. The latest they are recounting is that I have come to Elba to live with Napoleon as his mistress; and that I brought him as a present a pair of silver salt cellars—you know, the ones with the bowl suspended on tripods—that were modelled by Canova from my breasts."

Letizia turned upon her furiously. "Silenzio! If I hear you speaking such lewd words again I'll make Napoleon send you back to Borghese."

Letizia settled down to quiet, peaceful days; the most peaceful she had ever known. Surrounded by portraits and miniatures of the absent children, arranged so that she could look up from her knitting and smile upon them, she spent placid mornings in the room that opened on the terrace. The afternoons were usually more active; a visit to Napoleon to find out how he was, how he had slept, what his plans were for the day, and what news had come to him from the outer world. She watched him quietly, disturbed now and then by the doubt Pauline had planted. Was he planning something that he had not told her of! He never complained; and yet there were moments when she suspected he was chafing under the isolation. She soon saw there was little companionship for him in the officers about him. Beside his genius the men who had followed him to Elba were dull and commonplace. Bertrand might have been amusing if he had not been so completely dominated by a wife who was continually having miscarriages; Drouot, the wise man of the Grand Army, was too respectful to enter

into arguments; and Boinod, a friend from the days of Toulon, had grown so deaf that conversation with him had become impossible. Visitors were welcomed to the island kingdom with unmistakable enthusiasm; especially those who came from England. When Letizia asked Napoleon why he received people of a country which had always been his enemy he replied that one might hate the British but one could never despise them. She attributed the answer to unconfessed ennui; and the fear of uncertainty began to color the peacefulness of her days. Letters, too, coming irregularly from the continent were hardly reassuring. The Allied powers had increased their surveillance over all members of the family. Murat and Caroline were being drawn into a net of intrigue that surely meant disaster. Joseph was virtually a prisoner in Switzerland. Jerome and Catherine were moving from pillar to post in constant uncertainty. Elisa was living a temporary existence in Montpellier. Louis was growing more and more hysterical under the strain of Hortense's refusal to give up her children. Lucien and her brother, still in Rome under the protection of the Pope, were the only two who appeared happy. She wrote to them all constantly—all except Caroline. Her heart had been steeled against this daughter since the day Napoleon had told her of her faithlessness to his cause.

The need of funds, in spite of Saveria's confidence in the future, soon began to complicate the situation. The treaty of Fontainebleau had assigned two million francs a year to the exiled Emperor. But, as Letizia had feared, these funds were not forthcoming. The Bourbons had shown themselves worthy of her doubts. The income from the island, less than half a million francs, was not nearly sufficient to keep up the household expenses and take care of the fortifications which Napoleon insisted the island needed. In spite of these conditions, Letizia found a certain satisfaction in seeing

her economy of years justified. She wrote to her brother to sell the diamonds she had left in safe-keeping with the Torlonia bankers in Rome. The proceeds, half a million francs, she carried to Napoleon with a smile of pride. "Do with it as you choose, my son. And do not worry. There is still much more available." And to convince him of her sincerity, she made him a present which she had had her brother send her, a diamond clasp arranged to be attached to his belt and hold his sword.

Pauline, in spite of her soirées and theatricals, often came to her with alarming suggestions. "Napoleon has told me nothing, Maman; but I suspect almost anything. There are many mysterious conferences going on in the Palazzo. Only last night, finding I could not sleep, I wrapped myself up and went out into the garden. No one knew I was there. I had not been there long before I saw a small boat land this side of the town. A group of men sprang out and came up to the garden entrance of the Palazzo. Evidently they were expected, for the door was opened before they reached it. I waited hours. They did not come out until just before dawn and at once hurried down to the boat and put out to sea."

Letizia clasped her hands. "What does it mean?"

"He is planning to return to France. And it is none too soon. A rumor has recently reached here that the Allies are determined to carry Napoleon from this island to a much more remote spot. They say he is much too near for the safety of Europe."

"Where do they plan to take him?"

"To the end of the world—where he will never be heard of again. It is that foul Talleyrand's idea."

Letizia's hands pressed against her heart. "He shall not go. He is happy here. They gave him this island. It is his —ours. They cannot take him away."

"There is only one way for him to escape them. He must

return to France. They want him there. The Bourbons are detested. France is calling for him. Every one who followed him here is bored to tears. It would be stupid to turn deaf ears to such an opportunity. I don't believe he would hesitate a moment if he were able to finance the expedition."

Letizia's head lifted with resolution. "That need not deter him. I still have a fortune. He knows it is all his if he needs it."

Pauline threw her arms about her mother. "Tell him that, Maman. Let him know we are with him in everything; that we approve. Why should we waste time here when Paris is pining for our return! They say the court of those fat, ugly Bourbons is enough to make one weep. Have you seen the pictures of the Duchesse d'Angoulême! She looks like a sausage tied in the middle. And Louis XVIII—nothing but a pig. No wonder Paris wants us back. They see now what a good time we gave them. Let's go to Napoleon at once and urge him to hurry. There is not a moment to lose."

Letizia did not respond at once. The suggestion was too momentous to be decided in haste. She bided her time, watched carefully, forbade Pauline to speak until she had reached some conclusion, and let no opportunity escape in which Napoleon might broach the subject to her—if he wished to. His carefully maintained silence baffled her: Surely, if such a tremendous project was on foot, he would not long keep it from her.

The peacefulness of the first days faded. Restlessness and uncertainties were again to the fore. Winter slipped without marked change into spring. February came with a promise of imminent summer. And the faces of those comprising the little court took on an expression of alertness that was new. There was a marked change also in Napoleon. He was in the saddle constantly. He appeared to be

training for some feat which called for tautened muscles, the exercise of a body which had too long been allowed to slacken.

Pauline continually urged Letizia to speak to him. The time had come. Delay meant failure. Still Letizia hesitated. Once more she was spending long hours on her knees before the picture of the Madonna. And the counsel she derived from long meditation was to await the first words from her son.

The dinner in the Palazzo Mulini had been an unusually gay affair—a family party consisting only of Napoleon, Letizia, and Pauline. Napoleon was in one of his happiest moods. He had chaffed Pauline throughout the meal, pinched her ears until she was on the verge of tears, called his mother Signora Letizia—his habit when he was either very happy or very angry—and insisted upon playing many games of reversi. Letizia began to feel that Pauline's suspicions were utterly unfounded. No one could possibly be so light-hearted when grave undertakings were imminent. And yet, at the brightest moment of the evening, Napoleon had risen abruptly and left the room without explanation. An hour passed without his return. Pauline went out on the terrace to listen to some peasants who had gathered in the piazza to dance and sing. Letizia remained alone in the salone. From quiet contentment her thoughts gradually shifted to alarm. Why had Napoleon disappeared so suddenly! Why did he not return! She finally sought out the chamberlain and asked where her son had gone. She was told he was walking alone in the garden. She drew her shawl about her and went quietly out of the house. The soft night air welcomed her with the heavy scent of flowers. The moon was shining gently over sloping olive-groves and forests of pines; its silver patine was cool and refresh-

ing. A row of purple-black cypresses towered up against the brilliant blue of the sea. The whole world seemed slumbering contentedly. Only a few sounds broke the intense stillness—faint music of guitars and mandolins from the piazza; steadily tramping feet on the garden paths.

Letizia waited in the shadow of a fig-tree. The sound of the footsteps was drawing nearer. How often she had listened to that sound! Her head lifted. The sound had a new quality in it; or was it the old quality which she had not heard for so long a time—that unmistakable suggestion of the conqueror! A silhouette appeared. The path before her seemed filled with a huge shadow. It was bearing down upon her. But before it reached her, it stopped. She saw a hand raise and grasp a branch of the fig-tree beneath which she stood. Still, there was no suggestion that she had been seen. She held her breath and waited. Then she leaned forward. A murmur reached her—muttered words. Were they meant for her to hear! She waited. The words were repeated again—brokenly, uncertainly, questioningly.

"I must tell her. I cannot leave without telling her."

Letizia put out her hand slowly and touched the dark shadow. "What is it that is troubling you, my son? If you have something in your heart that is heavy to bear alone, there is no one better fitted to hear it than your mother."

She felt herself drawn into a swift embrace and held firmly.

"It is you I wish to confide in, Maman. But you must promise to guard my secret well. You must tell it to no one —not even Pauline." His head lifted and in the soft light Letizia saw that he was smiling. "I am leaving here to-night."

Letizia started from his embrace. "To-night!"

He nodded.

"Where are you going, my son?"

"To Paris."

Letizia drew away from him and walked down the path. His words followed her, still broken and uncertain. "But, Maman—surely you approve! France has called me back. I cannot refuse. You would not have me fail them!"

She held up a silencing hand. "Let me think a few moments alone. I must forget I am your mother. I must do that in order to counsel you wisely."

She moved farther along the garden path until she reached the confining wall. In a niche in the crumbling plaster a statue showed indistinctly. Yellow roses almost smothered the little shrine. She put out her hand and touched the crude symbol of the one to whom she had so constantly addressed her prayers. Her eyes closed. Her lips moved noiselessly.

She remained there so long, so motionless, so silent, that Napoleon finally came toward her with impatient strides. "Surely you must see that I can do nothing else, Maman!"

She turned toward him and raised her head. In the silver radiance her eyes shone with a resplendent light. The few moments had brought a complete change to her. There was fire in her glance now—a flame that burned with compelling inspiration.

"Go, my son—go and follow your destiny. You may fail. The outcome may be death. I see now that to live here forgotten and ignored is not to be your fate. My hopes and prayers have been those of an old woman. I am ashamed of them now. Go—and I will pray that God, who has protected you in so many battles, will still watch over you. He will never let you die by poison, nor in any way unworthy of you—but with your sword in your hand."

A fortnight later Letizia dictated a letter to Rosa Mellini which was sent off to Lucien.

"My beloved son: It is a great joy to me to give you news of the departure of our dear Emperor from this island and of his safe arrival at Golfe Jouan, near Antibes. On the 24th, at nine o'clock in the evening, the Emperor left Porto Ferrajo; on the morning of the 25th he caught sight, near the mainland, of an English corvette; on the same day, toward noon, near the Cap Corse, he saw a French sloop-of-war; and at six o'clock a French brig. This last was going to meet the fleet. It exchanged words with the brig which was carrying the Emperor. The sight of all these war-ships troubled the Emperor; but he had everything in readiness to defend himself in case of need. His lucky star protected him from all danger and fear. Indeed, the Emperor said he rated that day as highly as the one which gave him victory at Austerlitz. On the 28th, at five o'clock in the morning, the Emperor caught sight of the ship he had seen the day before, this time toward the north, but at ten o'clock it disappeared. The wind was most favorable, my dear son, as they were able to make four and a half miles an hour. At ten o'clock of the same morning, the Emperor placed the tricolored cockade in his hat, and all the troops did the same amid loud shouts of 'Long live the Emperor!' The transports had followed far behind; but on March 1st at dawn they caught up with him. This gave the Emperor great pleasure. At last the fleet cast anchor in the Golfe Jouan and the troops disembarked. The inhabitants received the Emperor with great joy. Messengers were sent throughout all the country to announce the day of resurrection and proclamations ad hoc were despatched. The Emperor counts very much on the fidelity of the troops scattered over France, since a courier from Paris to the Prince of Monaco, whom the Emperor met on the road, brought the news that our Emperor would be received with open arms by the soldiers and the French people. On March 1st at midnight the

Emperor moved toward Lyons. The Emperor is well and my joy is unbounded. Pauline has already left for Italy. I shall leave in three days, if the weather is favorable. I count on landing at Civita Vecchia. Addio, my beloved son. I embrace you tenderly, as well as every member of your family.

VOSTRA AFFETTUOSISSIMA MADRE."

II

"THE Allied Powers have declared that Napoleon has placed himself outside the bounds of civil and social relationships; and that, as an enemy and disturber of world peace, he should be consigned to public prosecution."

"They dare say that!" Letizia's eyes, dulled with fatigue from the long journey, suddenly blazed with scorn. "And what do they say of those Bourbons who failed to carry out the treaty of Fontainebleau, robbed the Imperial treasury, tried to make every member of the Imperial family a prisoner, seized illegally everything that belonged to us, even encouraged plots to assassinate the Emperor! Are they considered worthy of the trust and confidence of the world! France knows better. France has shown her belief in us. All the way here, from the frontier to Paris, the people have thronged to welcome me. Never during the days of the Empire was there such devotion to our cause."

She leaned heavily upon Lucien's arm as he led her to a seat under the trees in the Elysée garden. She had arrived only a few hours before, accompanied by her brother, after a journey that had lasted weeks—a journey of constant dangers, from Elba to Naples, from Naples to Gaeta, from there to Leghorn, where Jerome had joined her, and finally to Golfe Jouan, whence the travel across France had been broken by a few days at Lyons. But at last—grazie a dio! —she was safe in Paris, though too late for the celebration which Napoleon had proclaimed as the Champ de Mai. She had driven straight to the house which had so often rung with Pauline's gay laughter and found three of her sons awaiting her—Napoleon, Joseph, Lucien. She had opened her arms first to Napoleon. "My son—you are well!" And

Napoleon had held her off laughingly while he said: "Signora Letizia, before you greet me you must know who it is stands before you—a Corsican werewolf—a tiger—a fiend—a tyrant—a usurper—an outlaw. Dare you call such a felon your son?" Her arms tightened about him. "I shall call you only Emperor." Then there was Joseph, whom she had not seen for a whole year, with Julie beside him—as peaceful and sweet as ever; and Lucien, once more in Paris and restored to his brother's confidence; and last of all Hortense, distinguished, assured, gracious—the Beauharnais charm enduring through all tempests—forgiven, enjoying every favor, and apparently holding first place in the household over which her mother had so long reigned. But the reunion was too full of joy to find fault with anything. Dinner with them all about her was outwardly a gay affair. It was only beneath their noisy chatter that Letizia had been quick to sense an undercurrent of uncertainty. Napoleon's hilarity was not entirely convincing; Joseph's calm countenance hid something suggestive of doubts; Lucien's nervous glances were far from soothing. No—their gaiety was not entirely spontaneous. She knew them too well to be deceived. Yet she bided her time until she could get Lucien away from the others, in a quiet spot in the garden, and hear from him everything that had taken place since Napoleon's return.

"Tell me first of yourself—how Napolione received you. What made you decide to come to Paris?"

"Joseph was the peacemaker. He wrote me Napoleon wanted me to come."

"What did you say when you met after so many years?"

"No words were necessary. Our eyes met—we were in one another's arms."

Letizia's smile was radiant. "And he has made you a prince of France. You are no longer merely a Roman prince

—a Papal title. You are once more one of the family—the Imperial family." She sighed with deep contentment. "Think of the years I have prayed and waited for this!"

"Too long, perhaps, Maman."

"Hush. Do not speak so. I am too happy to hear doubts of anything. They tell me Napolione has given you the Palais Royale to live in. Are you happy there? Do you like it?"

Lucien's shrug was deprecating. "It is not bad. The Duc d'Orleans showed rather good taste in doing it up. Of course there are many changes I shall undertake. First, I am choosing the livery. What do you think of chocolate with gold braid?"

Letizia watched his restless eyes, his indifferent gesture, with misgivings. "But, Lucien, do you not realize that he is doing everything to show his love for you—his admiration!"

"I suppose he is trying to make up for past insults. I shall know better, after I have asked him if he intends to recognize my wife and children, how sincere he is. His commands, the day after I arrived, were liberal enough. They were published in all the papers." He pulled a cutting from his pocket and read it aloud. "The Grand Marshal will call upon Prince Lucien this evening. The Grand Marshal with Monsieur Fontaine will go over the Palais Royale and prepare the proper suites for the Prince Lucien. The Grand Marshal will arrange with the Grand Master of Ceremonies the proper honors to be rendered Prince Lucien of France. All Ministers, the Council of State, and the Commune of Paris will be advised of the day and hour when Prince Lucien will receive them. The Imperial Guard will salute the Prince Lucien next Sunday. Prince Lucien will rank after Prince Louis and before Prince Jerome. Tomorrow, at nine o'clock, Prince Lucien will establish him-

self in the Palais Royale. The Grand Marshal will furnish the household at the expense of the Emperor. The Grand Marshal, the Grand Chamberlain, and the Grand Master of the Horse will arrange a suite of honor. The Imperial stables will provide as many horses and equipages as Prince Lucien may desire."

"What more could he do to make your welcome sumptuous! What have you said to him? Have you expressed your thanks?"

"I told him I should serve him with zeal as long as he thought I could be useful to him."

"Useful! You can be more useful to him than any one. Was it not you—you alone—who made him First Consul! Where would he have been that day of Brumaire without you! If you had been here last year he would never have been exiled to Elba. You can do everything for him. You have been sent here from heaven to aid him."

Lucien paced up and down the garden path, strangely unresponsive to her enthusiasm. Something was wrong. But then, there always had been between these two. They had antagonized one another ever since they were little boys together in Corsica. Would nothing, even grave events upon which the destiny of both rested, ever bring them closer together? Her happiness over the reunion began to lessen. And she had hoped for so much from it. She had considered her arrival at Pauline's house, instead of that baleful Tuileries, a good omen. That Napoleon had found the heat of the older palace insufferable and moved to this house with the refreshing garden, she interpreted as a promise of happiness. But Lucien's preoccupation—his silence! It was not like him to be careful with words. Consternation swept over her.

"Speak, my son. I wish to hear your thoughts."

Lucien stood before her with scowling countenance.

"Maman, things are not going well. Napoleon is on the wrong track. His much-heralded Champ de Mai was a pitiful fiasco. He dressed himself in white satin and ostrich plumes when the people expected to see him in his old green coat of victorious campaigns. And the raison d'être of the day was missing. He planned the celebration to crown his wife Empress, his son King. Neither was there. At his command—it was more a plea—to Marie Louise to return to him, she replied that she preferred to remain under the more permanent protection of her father. She might have added that she found her lover's arms more satisfying. As for his son—he is now known as the Duc de Reichstadt."

Letizia's eyes flashed. "She should have been waiting for him here on her knees before the Tuileries. She is more detestable than the créole ever was."

"Her refusal to come to him was the first step taken against him by the Allies. All the representatives now in Vienna—of Austria, France, Spain, Great Britain, Portugal, Prussia, Russia, Sweden—have declared war upon him. And not upon France, mind you—upon him alone—Napoleon Bonaparte. They say they will do no harm to France."

"But he is France. France called him back. He answered the call because he felt his country needed him—just as it needed him when he returned from Egypt."

"We shall soon know how much France wants him. He has begun badly. He is surrounding himself once more with men who have proved themselves traitors over and over again. Fouché——"

"Surely not that demon! Lucien—you must forbid that."

Lucien laughed. "Maman—you talk as if I had some power over him. Only yesterday I tried to persuade him to reply civilly to Madame de Staël's letter. She wrote that she was happy over his return and was ready to devote all her literary talent from now on to the cause of France.

Her only request was that he return to her the two hundred thousand francs which the government owed her father. His reply was that he was not rich enough to comply with her request. It is not the time to make new enemies. He has enough as it is. And he should realize that France is sick of war. But in spite of this, he has issued a call for two hundred thousand soldiers. Only sixty thousand have responded. He does not seem able to see that the nation wishes to return to the days of the revolution when they had tribunes, assemblies, constitutions, elections, speeches. They want neither emperor nor king. They want rulers elected by themselves, they want freedom of speech, and most of all freedom of the press. They fought and died for this. Why should they not have it! Give this to them and Napoleon will retain their love. Deny it them and he will surely fall."

"But he is quite ready to give them everything they wish!"

"He says that—and acts differently. He says he wants peace; but he only sees peace through victory. I confess I do not know what he actually intends to do. He has given the people a new constitution. Benjamin Constant worked out the details. It would have been acceptable except for an additional act which gives him complete power. I tried to make him see that this ruined the complete freedom the people demand. He could not see it. He cannot see anything but his own desires. And he has changed, Maman. He is fat; he lies for hours in hot baths; he sleeps a great deal. I fear almost anything. And he is to leave next week for more battles."

Letizia grasped Lucien's hands and pulled him down on the bench beside her. "My hopes, my faith, are in you, Lucien. You must help him. There is no one else. I saw Joseph fail during the siege of Paris. He is lacking in our

force. You alone are our salvation. Let nothing deter you. Forget everything but that Napolione is your brother. Save him, Lucien! Save him!"

A week later Letizia sat beside Hortense in a tribune reserved for the session of the Chamber opened by Napoleon. The hall was filled with senators, deputies, the whole official world of Paris, gathered to hear the discourse of the Emperor before he departed to defend himself against the advancing enemy. Letizia viewed the gathering through eyes that had been opened by Lucien's words. Though listening attentively to Napoleon, she watched closely the faces of the gathering. There was something different in those intent countenances from what she had noticed in former meetings of the assemblies she had attended. The applause was not spontaneous. Real enthusiasm was lacking. Where before there had been blind acceptance of words hurled from the throne, there were now questions, interpolations. What was the meaning of those words from deputies! "Even the will of the victorious ruler will not persuade the nation to go beyond the bounds of self-defense." And the comment of senators seemed to veil only slightly some warning. "The French Government will not be blinded by the glamour of victory." Her glance travelled from the men who were daring to raise their voices against her son to the Emperor. His face struck her like a blow. It was white with the pallor of fury. Yet he made no reply. He stood there silent, trembling, ill with rage.

She hurried away from the gathering and went straight to her room in the Elysée. A window open on the trees of the garden offered soothing peace. She sank down in a chair and rested her head in her hands. The world seemed trembling about her. Had she advised her son unwisely! Was it a mistake for him to return to France! Was Lucien right

in saying that he had changed—that he was no longer the man who had conquered the world! For a few moments she longed for Pauline. Her frivolous attitude toward grave events might have robbed the days of some of their heavy gloom. But Pauline had fallen into the hands of the enemy. Landing at Viareggio from Elba, she had gone to Elisa's deserted castle at Campignano and found herself at once surrounded by Austrian troops. They had entered the castle during the night and informed her she was their prisoner until instructions came from Vienna. Her thoughts shifted to the only absent son, Louis, too ill to come to Paris; then on to Elisa, wandering about in search of a safe place to lay her head; and finally, for a bare moment, she wondered over the fate that would probably overtake Caroline and Murat. Was there no light anywhere!

When voices reached her from the floor below, she did not move. She did not want any of them to find her. She was utterly weary of endless discussions that seemed to lead nowhere. She did not feel able even to listen to Lucien's convincing arguments about this, that, and the other question. She was exhausted, spent. Age seemed suddenly to have fallen upon her with heavy hands. She felt a demanding need to be alone and await calmly the outcome of the events that were crashing about her.

Even later in the evening, when Napoleon came into the room and sat beside her, she made no effort to speak encouraging words to him. They sat silently side by side, while night swept over the city and blotted out a view of the garden. Sounds from without floated into the room like vague memories of erstwhile emotions. Candles appeared in the corridors. The door became a square of light. Shadows flitted to and fro. A voice floated up to them from a room below—Lucien's. He was still talking—talking—talking.

Napoleon stirred, lifted his head, sighed. "I shall leave in the morning, Maman."

Letizia did not answer. What was there she could now say!

"I must win a brilliant victory. After that—" The sentence was left unfinished. "While I am gone write to your good friend in Rome."

"My good friend?"

"The Pope. Tell him my eyes are open at last. I am ready to do everything for him now. Tell him I will recognize all his rights; that I will guarantee him his states; and that this time I will keep my word. Yes—I will keep my word."

Letizia's hand slipped into his. She knew he was thinking of her now. His words were an unconfessed plea for forgiveness from the one who had protected her and welcomed her from an unfriendly world. But still she did not speak.

Napoleon pressed her hand. "Do not be discouraged. It is absolutely necessary that I win a brilliant victory over my enemies. After that—I shall fight no more. There will be peace for us all. This is my last war."

She raised his hand to her lips and kissed it. "God grant that your words come true, my son."

After a fortnight of agonized waiting—during which hope and despair struggled for supremacy, with despair finally winning the victory—Letizia found herself walking with lagging steps along the paths of the garden Josephine had planted. Mingling with the delicate fragrance of roses was the heavy perfume of tropical plants brought from faraway Martinique—a penetrating scent, strange, exotic, of another world. How weirdly the perfume was a part of the surroundings, of the house called accursed, Malmaison, the house in which Napoleon had chosen to spend his last hours

in France! The presence of the woman who had reigned here seemed embodied in the scent of the flowers she had chosen. What a victory for her to have had the power, even though now gone into the unknown world of shadows, to call her lover back to the scene of their happiest days! A vision of her rose before Letizia as she had first seen her, surrounded by the pomp and glory of those days at Montebello. Her velvet voice, her gentle, graceful gestures, her melting glances. With her had come success, achievement, splendor. Without her—downfall. And now, in the midst of utter defeat, she had reached out from another world and drawn her lover back to her—woven her old mystic spell that had made him seek out the spot which held all that was left of her.

Letizia's steps carried her farther and farther from the house. Once or twice she put up her hands as if to shut out the voices that were still ringing in her ears; but the words came back, insistent, terrifying. Refuge from the enemy! Escape from pursuing vengeance! Endless suggestions for safety. Each place mentioned was a dagger in her heart. America—the United States; over there where mankind had begun, where one could live by the sweat of one's brow. Mexico—where patriots were fighting for liberty. Caracas—the Argentine—California. Farther away each time; always flight; always the outlaw pursued by hatred. But no matter where it was to be, she was ready to follow. The one who needed her most was the one to whom she was ready to give herself. Too old to go! Did they mean to insult her! Look at her. Were any of them stronger! What matter if more than threescore years had passed over her, did she not still hold herself upright, was not her courage burning as brightly as ever! Had not Napoleon himself said she would outlive them all! Yes—she would wait, if her presence meant increased burden in these crucial mo-

ments; but they must understand that it was only waiting; once the favorable time had come she would be ready to undertake the voyage—no matter what the destination.

In the midst of the endless discussion a new hope had burst upon them all. The sound of cannon had penetrated into the room. The enemy was approaching the city. Plans for flight had swiftly changed into a desire to defend Paris. Napoleon had turned to Lucien and commanded him to write a hasty communication to the government—a letter addressed to the one who had assumed the place left vacant by the abdication of the Emperor—Fouché. Letizia had listened anxiously to the dictated words. There was an imperiousness in the message, in the voice, in the bearing of her son that, while she listened, made her heart pound once more.

"I propose to place myself at the head of the army once more. At sight of me the soldiers will recover their courage and throw themselves upon the enemy and defeat him. Victory once more regained, I swear upon my word as a general, as a soldier, as a citizen, to retire at once from command. My desire is to conquer, not for myself, but for France."

From the dominating figure, standing so prepotently in the centre of the room, Letizia's glance had shifted to Lucien. Though apparently giving all his attention to the penning of the message, his face gave no hint of approval of the inspiring words. The straight line of his lips held no hope. Letizia stared at him in bewilderment. Why did he not respond to this grave gesture! Did he not realize what it meant! He had not been this way when Napoleon returned from Waterloo and called upon him to address the Chambers. He had responded to this call for help with all his youthful fire and eloquence. He had once more been the flaming youngster that had saved his brother on that

memorable day of Brumaire. His thrilling voice had rung out with all its former beauty. He had not hesitated one moment in suggesting to the Emperor, in face of all those dissenting voices, to dissolve the Chambers, declare Paris in a state of siege, seize all the power, issue a call to the remaining troops—and thus save France and himself. But Napoleon had only temporized; he had consulted others; and Lucien's eloquence had faded into the moody silence which Letizia now knew meant utter hopelessness.

The message had been despatched to Fouché; the moment of rejuvenated hope had degenerated into further discussions of possible refuge; and Letizia, feeling she could bear the futile words no longer, had quietly left the room.

And now—surrounded by the roses the créole had planted—Letizia waited for Fouché's reply. She tried vainly to push the suggestion so plainly shown on Lucien's face from her thoughts. What if Fouché and the group now in power, those who had forced the Emperor to abdicate without even considering his pleas for the succession of his son, those who could no longer see glorious victories and spoke only of the bones of their fathers and sons and brothers whitening on battle-fields, what if they should accept this last offer of their former hero and give him the chance to die with his sword in his hand defending France! Would that not be the end she had always foreseen! Would it not be the fitting climax for her son of battle!

Hours passed. The sound of galloping horses broke the stillness of the garden. She lifted her head with a lifelong gesture of determination. Her lips murmured the familiar word coraggio. Yet her steps, at first so steady as she turned back toward the house, faltered when she reached the door. Was her courage great enough to hear Fouché's reply! If the offer was accepted, would she, knowing what it meant, knowing so well the intention beneath the offer, be able to

hold her head high until she had bade him good-by forever!

She stood on the threshold and looked into the room. They were all where she had left them hours before: Hortense near the window, her blonde beauty dulled by anxiety; Lucien still seated at the table where he had written his brother's letter; Joseph sunk in desperate dejection; Jerome nervously twisting the buttons of his brocaded waistcoat; Napoleon pacing the floor with impatient, nervous steps; and beyond, in the shadows of the room, almost shadows themselves now, the few faithful friends—Bernard, Coulaincourt, Lavalette, Labédoyère, Ney, Talma, While she waited, another joined the group, a man covered with dust, who carried in his hand Fouché's reply—General Beker.

Napoleon grasped the letter, tore it open, read the contents, and quickly turned toward the window. Over his shoulder came the fatal words. "He says the only way for me to save France is to leave it forever."

Letizia turned back to the garden. The stillness of evening was creeping stealthily up and wrapping itself close about the world—about her heart.

The moment for departure had come. The restless stamping of horses sounded before the door. Voices and hurrying feet reverberated along the corridors. Hortense was hastily sewing her parting gift—a necklace of diamonds—into Napoleon's waistcoat. Joseph, Lucien, Jerome were at the door. Letizia, alone in the salon, was standing upright, her hands tightly clasped, her lips moving in a constant prayer for strength enough to bear herself courageously through the ordeal.

A step sounded at the door. She looked up. Napoleon was coming toward her with extended arms. She felt his hands

clasp firmly about her; she felt his lips touch first one cheek, then the other; she felt his grasp relax.

"Addio, Maman."

She must stem the flood of despair that swept through her. She was not the mother of puny sons—she was the mother of kings—of an emperor. She must bear herself accordingly. Yet she could not control her hands. They clung to him with desperate force.

"I will come to you—no matter where you go."

"Addio, Maman."

Again those words! Why had he chosen them! Why did they fall so definitely, so full of meaning, on the silent room! And why did she repeat them! Though struggling with all the force left in her, they rose to her lips as if placed there by some unescapable power.

"Addio, figlio mio."

Once more she was alone in the room, no longer upright, no longer dry-eyed, no longer the brave mother of an emperor—only a mother—a simple mother like thousands of others—weeping for a son that fate had torn from her. On her knees, her face streaming with tears, her hands clasping the crucifix that hung from her rosary, she murmured over and over again:

"Madonna santissima! Protect him—save him—carry me once more to him! Do not separate us forever! Have pity on me—Mother of God—for I, too, am a mother of all sorrows!"

BOOK VII

I

The Palazzo Bonaparte—it had always been known by the name of Rinuccini until Letizia bought it and established herself there—dominated the corner of the Piazza Venezia and the Corso. Like most Roman palaces, the exterior was forbidding; yet once beyond its wide portal, the spacious staircase, the cold entrance-hall where a baldachino was always kept in readiness for the visits of the Pope, the aspect suddenly changed. Footmen in green-and-gold liveries, formerly worn at the Tuileries, opened doors that led into a suite of rooms impressive for their elegance and luxury. An English traveller, writing home from a sojourn in Italy, said: "Roman palaces leave much to be desired on account of the striking contrast between their dignified exteriors and the casual discomfort of the living-quarters. An exception to this general aspect are the palaces occupied by the Bonapartes—those belonging to Madame Mère, Cardinal Fesch, Lucien, and the ex-King of Holland. Their charming sister, Princess Borghese, occupies her husband's palace. All these are distinguished by comfort, order, and elegance. One finds them well heated—an unheard-of thing in Rome; the servants are dressed in magnificent liveries; and there are rich carpets everywhere."

The reception-rooms were furnished with many things that had been used at Pont, in the house of the Rue St. Dominique, even in Ajaccio. The walls were hung with full-length portraits of men who had once sat upon thrones; there was the well-known collection of prints depicting battles; and the marble bust of Napoleon dominated the surroundings, as it had always done. The view from the win-

dows included the Piazza Venezia and the Capitoline hill.

Letizia found the view sympathetic. It was filled with glories that had passed; yet glories that had left their indelible mark on the world; and it was still the heart of the Eternal City. The Capitol, built by Michael Angelo, the centre of turmoil of centuries, rarely held her thoughts. To her it appeared futilely modern in comparison with the suggestions that emanated from the soil on which it stood. Was it not there that Romulus and Remus had been suckled by a wolf when the world was young! Was it not there the Sybil had spoken to Augustus of the coming of the Son of God! Was it not there Cæsars had ruled—Cæsars who had been the inspiration of her son!

Sitting before this view she, for the first time in her long life, let the hours slip idly by; not only hours, but days, weeks, months. Not even her hands were occupied; they were clasped tightly in her lap. Knitting seemed laid aside forever. Her features, always suggestive of ancient statues —had not Carlo often told her both her name and appearance embodied Roman glories!—became more and more like lifeless marble. To those about her—her brother, who lived in the apartments on the floor above; Rosa Mellini, who had followed her from Elba to become her constant companion and secretary; and the ever-faithful Saveria—she appeared alarmingly motionless and silent; almost mysterious in the unbroken calm in which she sat wrapped. They knew what she was thinking of; but they did not know the direction her thoughts had taken. Was she planning something that she was guarding from them! Had she some secret which she dared not share with others! Did she know something of which they were all ignorant!

Visits from the children in Rome—Lucien, Louis, Pauline —did not shake her from her apathy; nor letters from Elisa, now established in Trieste; from Caroline, who wrote

continually, recounting in detail the ignominious death which had overtaken Murat and pleading for maternal forgiveness; from Joseph, who had escaped to America and wrote constantly from his estate near Philadelphia; from Jerome, living with his wife on enemy soil. She apparently listened to these letters, when they were read to her, but she made no comment; unless her constantly reiterated question might be called comment: "Nabulio—where is he? Why do I not hear from him! Does no one know what they have done with him?" Even during the daily drive, which her brother forced her to take, she never seemed aware of her surroundings, took no interest in the scenes pointed out to her, maintained a silence that was impossible to break. Words passed over her like futile sounds.

Her silence lasted through months; and then was suddenly broken. It seemed that what she had so long been waiting for had finally come—tidings from that isolated rock in the middle of the ocean. Her brother put a letter into her hands. It had reached Rome through various secret channels, sent by an English woman, Mrs. Skelton, wife of the lieutenant-governor of St. Helena. She had just returned from the distant island and, risking political disgrace for her husband by transgressing the law forbidding any communication with the Bonaparte family, had dared to send a few words of comfort to the mother of the famous exile. He had arrived safely at St. Helena; he had established himself in the house called Longwood; he was under the supervision of the governor placed there by England to guard him; the friends who had followed him—Marshal Bertrand, General Gourgaud, General Montholon, and Las Cases—were living with him; to all appearances he was quite well.

Letizia lifted her head and smiled for the first time since she had bidden her son good-by at Malmaison.

"It is little—and yet it is so much. He is alive. He is well. I shall begin to live again. And though the voyage is long —much too long for me to undertake at my advanced age— I will go to him. Nothing shall separate us—not even the whole of allied Europe. Saveria—send the portiere at once to my children. Tell them to come to me immediately. These tidings will mean joy to them—as it means life to me."

Pauline was the first to come. She read the letter and burst into sobs. "At last we know something definite. Nothing could have been more cruel than this everlasting uncertainty—this secrecy that has lasted ever since he was carried away from England! Now we can begin to plan. This will make me well. For months I have not slept without dreaming of Napoleon. It has been worse than when I was held a prisoner by those vile Austrians. These horrible gazettes that reach us! You do not read them, Maman; but I have pored over them with the hope of finding something that would give me a clue to what had become of him. Only yesterday I read in a paper smuggled through to me of the tortures they had prepared for him on that desolate rock. It was meant to be funny—but it struck terror to my heart. They pictured him clad in the skins of wild beasts—Robinson Bonaparte, they called him—at the head of an army of four thousand cats sent from London to make war against the only inhabitants of the island, rats."

"Silenzio!" Letizia's voice rang out with the old command. "I do not wish to hear the jeers of little minds. Do not repeat their whinings to me."

"But I cannot help raging, Maman. Are not all of us subjected to the insults of every little petty official in Europe! I never receive a letter that has not been made filthy by the thumbing of their dirty hands. Every communication—even

bills sent me from dressmakers in Paris—is carried from bureau to bureau, profaned by leering eyes, registered, numbered, and copied. And most of them are months old."

"Futile efforts to insult us—because we are the family of the greatest hero the world has ever known. You should be proud of our sufferings—as I am."

"I have borne their offenses long enough. I shall protest now quite openly. It is too much to stand."

"You will stand it, Paoletta, because it is the wisest course to pursue. For the present," Letizia's voice became calmly authoritative, "we must continue to live a retired and discreet life. The Holy Father has opened his arms to us; he has given us a place of refuge; his generosity and kindness surpass human belief; he is our protector against the whole world. We must be careful to do nothing to arouse suspicions. Are you not familiar with the decision of the President of the Council in Paris!" She went to her desk and took from a drawer the portfolio which had for so many years held her private papers at Pont, in Paris, and now in Rome. She took a document from it and spread it on the table. "You seem to forget, my daughter, what our position is to-day." She read with a steady voice. " 'The members of the Bonaparte family, which has caused so much evil in France, have left the country forever. They will never again be permitted to enter France. A law has been promulgated against any of them who try to enter this country. The confiscation of their property, their rights, their titles—a step desired by every one—has only been evaded by our King's religious fidelity to justice. All members of this family and their descendants, including uncles and nephews, are hereby perpetually excluded from the kingdom. They will no longer be permitted to enjoy any civil rights or to acquire property, titles, income, pensions, etc. They will not be allowed to take a step outside the place

of their internment without legal authorization. Their letters are to be opened; their conversations reported; their actions controlled; and every means taken to prohibit their correspondence with the prisoner of St. Helena or the direct reception of any news from him.' "

Pauline listened with barely restrained impatience. "It is all nonsense, Maman. Those who inspired that law, the English themselves, are the ones who are most interested in helping us evade the restrictions. Napoleon's last words to them, when they made him a prisoner, hit them very hard." Pauline's expressive eyes glowed deeply. "If you treat me otherwise than as a guest, you will forfeit your honor and disgrace your flag!" The dramatic pose shifted quickly into one of intimate gossip. "There is a delightful Lord Holland and his wife here now. They are quite frank in expressing their sympathy for me—and Napoleon. They have asked me to bring them to see you, Maman. You must let me do it, because they promise to carry letters to England for us and have them despatched directly to Napoleon. If I were only well enough to go to him myself! I hate to think of him surrounded by those tiresome people who went with him. They are all hopelessly dull. I may be able to go to him yet. I am trying a new doctor. He assures me that if I follow his advice I shall soon be well and strong. It seems all my troubles come from not wearing *pantalons*. I promised him I would try them. Lady Holland has given me a pattern which I am having copied. I have ordered a dozen pair made of heavy, flesh-colored silk. Thank heaven, I am thin enough to wear them. I know they will make me look like a barrel. But what difference does it make what I wear in St. Helena—there in the middle of the ocean—far from even a trade route—a spot where the only inhabitants are slaves of the India Company! It must be exactly like Martinique. I hope not quite so unbearable."

Letizia listened to the endless chatter with indulgent expression. It had been months since Pauline's words had held any meaning for her. That she could actually hear them meant that the apathy of the past year was broken. And through them were now and then suggestions that she found herself clinging to. A means of corresponding with her son. But could these English be trusted! Was it not another trick to be used against them! Her son's words came back to her with significance. Perfidious Albion.

"Nothing is unbearable, Paulette—nothing when we think of what Napoleon is enduring. It is for his sake that I bear so silently every insult thrust upon me. All we can do is to live honorably and quietly and pray that the end of our ignominy is not far off. Only last week I was faced with the greatest test of patience that has yet been forced upon me. The offense emanated from the Vatican. The Secretary of State himself came from the Holy Father and recounted to me the protests that had reached them from Paris concerning me. It was reported that I was spending millions in Corsica to foment a conspiracy to save the Emperor. I was asked to reply to pages of questions and to give my word of honor that I would not interest myself in such an undertaking."

"What did you say, Maman?"

"It was a sore trial to respond quietly. Yet I did. I sent word to the Holy Father that I should like him to inform the man who calls himself Louis XVIII of France that I had no correspondence whatsoever with any one in Corsica; nor in France; and that I did not possess the millions so charitably attributed to me. Then I added that if I had a fortune I should not spend it in fomenting revolutions, but in fitting out an armed fleet to send to St. Helena to rescue the one who, by an infamous breach of faith, was being held there prisoner."

"Of course they will not believe you, Maman. Every one knows you have millions. Sometimes I think you are rather cruel not to help me a little."

Letizia's face grew severe. "You need nothing. You—all of you—have wasted fortunes on trifles. I always told you a day would come when you would repent of your extravagance. You called me stingy—a miser. Now you realize that I was right. You should be ashamed to come to me with your pleas for help. Besides," her head lifted with determination, "everything I now own was given me by Napolione. It does not belong to me. It is all his. And I shall spend it in trying to alleviate his sufferings—in aiding him in every possible way. Even if it takes every sou I have spent years in saving I shall not complain. What does it matter! I have been poor before. I have no fear of poverty. If it comes to the worst, and I no longer have a house to shelter me, I can go out on the streets and beg alms for the mother of an emperor."

Pauline's eyes fell before her mother's steady resolution. "Forgive me, Maman. You are right; you are always right." She sighed wistfully. "But it is easier for you to remain calm—you and Uncle Fesch. I am still young."

"Your uncle has had as much to bear as any of us. He has had to struggle continually against despicable treachery. And he has sacrificed everything to remain beside me. Think of the insults heaped upon him when we were left alone in Paris! Without my knowledge he addressed a plea to the Allies to permit us to remain there until I was able to travel. When he told me this I got out of my bed, ill as I was, and started on that endless journey. Nothing would have held me there. And all along the route he shielded me from insults, from pursuing spies, from the taunting cries of people who, a few months before, had welcomed us with open arms. Even when we reached Siena and hoped to find

a few weeks of repose in that remote town, he hid from me the fact that we were still being hounded from every refuge. And now they have taken from him his residence in Lyons, his position of archdeacon there. His only friend left is the Holy Father. Except for him, he would not have been accepted here by the cardinals of the Holy See."

Pauline moved about restlessly. "Uncle Fesch has his thirty thousand paintings to amuse himself with. I have nothing. It is easy to talk of being patient and resigned. But—how can I! If I wish to go to the baths at Lucca I have to beseech the government to give me permission. Every one is against me. My life is a hideous nightmare. Even Camillo has now turned against me and says he is going to demand an annulment of our marriage. He accuses me of all sorts of low things. He actually has the indecency to say that it is not my faithlessness that he complains of, but my lack of proper respect for him. His charges are incredible. He says no one could live with me; that I change the hour of dinner to suit my appetite; that my caprices are without end; that it was my mad pranks that drove him from his home and into the military service; that when he went to Paris to stop with me I gave him uneatable food, poor service, a hard bed—and that I made him pay for the time he was there as though he were lodged in an inn. And now he insists that I, according to some stupid Roman family custom, leave all the family jewels in the care of his banker; and when I wish to wear them I must go on bended knees, give my word that I will keep them only during the evening and return them early the next morning. Imagine my doing such a thing! He is quite mad. But I shall make him pay for such insults. I have refused to agree to our marriage being annulled. I will only consent to a legal separation—and even that only after he has consented to my occupying the Borghese palace, the villa at

Tusculum, and the pavilion in the Borghese gardens. I shall make this last my residence and change the name to the Villa Paolina. It is a heavenly place—surrounded by orange and lemon trees. It is an ideal house for a salon. The Marquis of Douglas wishes to be my cavaliere servente. He say he will bring all the English here to me. Don't hold up your hands in horror, Maman. I know what I am about. The English are the only people who are allowed to travel freely these days. They are the only ones who can aid us in communicating with Napoleon. Was it not an English woman who sent you the first news we have received from St. Helena! In a few weeks I shall have a regular service of couriers. As much as you hate intrigue, it is the only way for us to save ourselves. It was intrigue that made it possible for Julie to remain in France. Just because her sister is Bernadotte's wife, she is allowed to live where she pleases. Has she written you of her intention to join Joseph in America? I envy Joseph. He was clever to manage his escape. I wish Napoleon had accepted his offer to change places with him. If he had gone to that free country our troubles would have all been over."

A footman in the livery of the Tuileries appeared at the door and bowed ceremoniously. "Eccellenza—the billiard table has arrived."

Pauline's eyes opened in amazement. "A billiard table! Is Uncle Fesch going to transfer his affections from pictures to billiards?"

Letizia rose with an energy that impressed Pauline. "The billiard table is for me. Let us go look at it."

Pauline burst into gay laughter. "You, Maman—playing billiards! I can't believe it."

Letizia frowned upon the hilarity. "The doctor told my brother that it was necessary for me to exercise in order to keep well. He counselled a game after dinner every eve-

ning. I am going to leave nothing undone that will prepare me for the long journey."

"But, Maman—what journey?"

"To St. Helena."

Lucien received the news with customary enthusiasm. He arrived, breathless from the hurried journey from his villa at Frascati, and threw himself into his mother's arms. "I shall leave at once, join Joseph in America, and from there plan an expedition to reach Napoleon. You must come with me, Maman."

Letizia approved of his impetuous excitement; she found it in perfect sympathy with her reawakened energy; but his words, as usual, she knew were too thoughtless to be taken seriously. "I am ready to go at any moment, my son. It is all that I am now living for. But the moment has not yet come for us to attempt anything that might fail. We cannot leave here without permission. We must content ourselves with the means now being opened to us of communicating with Napolione."

Lucien strode about the room nervously. He resented measured consideration of any subject. Too much weighing of pros and cons robbed life of all zest. He threw himself into a chair with a heavy sigh. "How much longer can we stand all these restrictions! After months of demands, pleas, explanations, I have finally been granted permission to go to my estates at Canino—but only for a few weeks. My idea is to establish myself there and lead the life of a country gentleman. It is a restful and delightful place. Sometimes I feel that tranquillity and domestic happiness are everything; all the rest is empty noise. I have ordered an observatory built on the roof of the castle—a sort of belvedere from which I can study the stars. It would be easy to let oneself become absorbed in astronomy. What could be more wonderful than to sit through the night and watch

the constellations! Alexandrine would like it there. She is going to have another baby. My family is assuming enormous proportions." He sprang up again and was once more pacing the floor. "But all that must wait. Now that we know Napoleon is safe and well we must find some means of reaching him. If he had only listened to me during those hundred days. He threw away his whole career by utter stupidity. We could have held on there. The people wanted him."

Letizia's eyes blazed. "They still want him. It is only a question of time and patience. But I implore you, Lucien, let us do nothing in haste. We must make no false step. I might have kept him longer at Elba if I had tried. We should have waited until the world had realized how worthless those Bourbons were. This time we will act more slowly."

Late that afternoon, Louis appeared, leaning heavily on a stick and accompanied by his son—one of the children he had finally wrested by law from the clutches of Hortense. But only partially. A decision had been rendered that each child should spend a part of the year with each parent. Louis Napoleon had been the first to be sent to Rome.

Letizia recounted the news to Louis with less satisfaction than she had to the other children. She had grown accustomed to his indifference to the fate of his brothers and sisters, excusing his casual attitude to constant preoccupation over his health. He had no time for anything else except his continued interest in literature and the rewriting of his work which he was now calling *Marie or the Hollanders*. Still, she had hoped this news that his brother was alive and well would surely bring a glow of interest into his lustreless eyes. But no; the tidings were received without any expressions of joy. His only comment was a perfunctory word or two at the relief his mother must feel.

Disappointed, chilled, angry, Letizia turned to the young boy and made him sit beside her. She found little of Louis in him; and little of the charm which she had always felt, in spite of herself, his mother possessed. He seemed to her to embody fewer of the Bonaparte traits than any of her other numerous grandchildren. She often wondered what his future might be. Finding he responded only automatically to her efforts at conversation, she finally sent him in search of Saveria, who would surely give him some harmless Corsican concoction that she was continually preparing as an antidote to the miasmic climate of Rome.

"What are you doing with him, Louis, now that you at last have him with you?"

Louis' expression suggested surprise that he should have been asked such a question. "Above everything else, I wish him to be honest and religious. I have prepared a strict régime for him. His mother's influence has been most disastrous. He has no idea of study or system or obedience. I shall give him two holidays a week—Thursday and Sunday; but before he is given his Thursday liberty he must write to his mother. I am instructing him how to take excellent care of his body. In order to avoid contracting fever he is forbidden to touch this poisonous Roman water. Even when he cleans his teeth he is to use a light Bordeaux. He has been ordered to wash his feet once a week; clean his nails with lemon peel; his hands with brandy; and never under any circumstances to use soap. All scents are prohibited. When he goes to the theatre he must put on his hat and wrap before leaving the loge. You know how draughty these Italian halls are. I have ordered very large shoes made for him so that he can wear them on either foot. I have shown him how to clean his hair with a dry sponge; also how to wear his suspenders loose enough not to interfere with his carrying himself upright. He must take care

of his own clothes and learn to spend the few coins I give him with intelligence. I have explained to him that he must obey his superiors implicitly, even though he may consider their orders unjust. My ambition and determination are to eradicate every tendency that he may have inherited from his mother's family. Every Bonaparte child should be brought up with the traditions of our clan. I shall never cease to regret that Napoleon's child is never to know our influence."

Letizia started as though she had been stabbed. "Never! Why do you use such a word, Louis! I have already written to Parma to his mother—though you can well imagine what a cost to my pride it was!—and asked her to send him to me for a little visit."

Louis' lips twisted contemptuously. "And what sort of an answer have you received, Maman?"

The color faded from Letizia's face; her eyes grew dull; she raised a hand to hide her expression of chagrin. "None."

The first tidings from St. Helena brought back new vigor and health to Letizia. She no longer passed the days in apathetic silence. She became alert and energetic. She was as strong and well as she had always been. Her drives about Rome were no longer silent promenades which depressed her companions; she showed interest in everything; she even admitted visitors to her salons and received the English Pauline brought to her with marked graciousness. And regularly, every evening after dinner, she was to be found in the spacious ballroom playing billiards with her chamberlain, Colonna di Lecca.

Once the long period of silence between Rome and the distant island had been broken, the spell seemed to have snapped definitely. More tidings followed quickly. Colonel Piontkowski, a Polish exile who had spent months at St.

Helena, appeared in England with an account of the Emperor's life there; the next to bring news was a Corsican, Santini, who had found his way to the exile's home by endless adventures and had remained with him until his patriotism had brought him into disfavor with the English authorities and caused his deportation; and finally Las Cases, who, acting as amenuensis of the Emperor, had returned to Europe with a detailed written account of the captive's life which he declared he was going to present to the Allied sovereigns in the hope of having the banishment abrogated.

Each arrival meant to Letizia a closer approach to her son; and though none of these returning friends were allowed to come to her in person, their reports reached her, sometimes by means of letters smuggled through, more often by word of mouth of travellers. To the first two she sent substantial sums of money as a gesture of appreciation for the joy their words had brought her; to Las Cases, who wrote that he had received permission from the English authorities to send the exile everything necessary for his comfort and amusement, she sent one hundred thousand francs. "This is only the beginning," she wrote him. "Everything I possess is at the disposition of my son, even though it be necessary for me to give up my house and live without servants. Keep me constantly advised of what you think would please him. I am writing to all my children to-day to inform them of my intention of sending a sum each month to the Emperor and to request them to contribute everything in their power." The first to reply to this suggestion was Joseph—with an order for twenty-five thousand francs; then came Jerome—with fifteen thousand; Eugene with twenty-one; and finally Elisa and Caroline. Lucien, deep in debt, was unable at the moment to contribute anything; but Pauline, also pursued by creditors,

deprived herself of her famous chef, Chandelier, whom she sent off at once to London with the request that he be given passage to St. Helena. "His delicious dishes will comfort Napoleon more than any amount of money sent him," she declared.

Each morning was now given over completely to letter-writing. Always avid of receiving letters and sending them, Letizia dictated by the hour to Rosa Mellini. But where she had formerly written almost exclusively to her family, her correspondence now became quite general. She wrote frequently to Lord Holland, enclosing letters to be forwarded to her son; she wrote to thank Lord Bathurst for his kindness in permitting her letters to be sent officially; she wrote to Metternich demanding that he release a courier who had been imprisoned for carrying letters she had given him; she wrote many communications to the Pope in which she reiterated her appreciation of his continued protection and many kindnesses; and always—never missing one day—she wrote a few lines with her own hand to her exiled son. "After months of agony, the news that you are safe and well makes me feel as though I had been born again. You know that I have always had deep convictions about the future. My strength and courage now convince me that I shall not die without once more having held you in my arms."

Hearing that a meeting of the rulers of Europe was to take place at Aix-la-Chapelle, she decided, without consulting any member of the family, to send them an appeal which came spontaneously from her heart.

"A mother, afflicted beyond all expression, has hoped through many long months that a reunion of Your Imperial and Royal Majesties would restore her happiness. Surely this occasion will provide you with the opportunity to dis-

cuss the prolonged captivity of the Emperor Napoleon. I feel certain that your nobility of soul, your power, the memory of past events will influence Your Imperial and Royal Majesties to interest yourselves in the liberation of a prince who once shared your interests and your friendship. Is it possible for you to allow a sovereign to die in the anguish of exile; one who, trusting in the magnanimity of his enemies, cast himself into their arms! My son could have sought asylum with his father-in-law, the Emperor of Austria; he might have trusted himself to the noble character of the Czar Alexander; he could have taken refuge with His Prussian Majesty who, no doubt, would have been touched by the memory of former alliances. Shall England be permitted to punish him for the trust he placed in her! The Emperor Napoleon is no longer to be feared. He is infirm. And even though he were full of vigor and possessed of the means which Providence once placed in his hands, he would no longer let himself be drawn into civil war—which he now abhors. Sires, I am a mother, and the life of my son is more precious to me than my own. Forgive, in the name of sorrow, the liberty I take in addressing this letter to Your Imperial and Royal Majesties. Do not render vain the appeal of a mother who protests against the lingering cruelty imposed upon her son. In the name of Him who is the essence of all goodness, and of whom Your Imperial and Royal Majesties are the earthly images, interest yourselves in seeing that the tortures of my son cease. Interest yourselves in having him set free. I implore this of God. I implore it of you who are His lieutenants on earth. Reasons of state have their limits. Posterity, which immortalizes everything, loves above everything else the generosity of conquerors.

MADAME MÈRE."

Months later this letter was returned to Letizia. It had never been opened.

II

In the midst of Letizia's activities and letter-writing, her hopes received a deadening blow. A letter from Las Cases, written to her brother, was read to her by the Cardinal.

"Under no circumstances permit Madame to consider the voyage to St. Helena. The journey is long and dangerous; it lasts at least three months; and the climate of the island is extremely insalubrious. It would be fatal for any one of her age to undertake such an expedition. The Emperor expressed himself definitely against the idea of his mother coming to him."

"I do not believe a word of it," Letizia exclaimed angrily. "Napolione knows that nothing would be too great for me to undertake—if it would mean happiness to him. I could have no greater joy than to go there merely as his cook, his servant, his slave. As for the dangers of the journey—" She ended with a contemptuous shrug.

The Cardinal attempted calm persuasion. "Las Cases knows so much better than we do what is wise to do. Since he returned from St. Helena he has not left a stone unturned to aid the Emperor. His first step was to send a detailed report to the English Minister of Colonies; he presented a plea to the British Parliament; he wrote to the Czar, begging his help in obtaining permission from the English Government to send supplies to Napoleon. He is the one connecting-link between us and that desolate rock." Fesch sought through the mass of papers on the table before him and found what he felt would aid his arguments. "It was to him that Lucien wrote: 'My heart draws me continually toward St. Helena. I cannot bear the idea of my brother languishing and dying there in exile. If you feel

confident that he will be as happy as I over our reunion, I implore you to present my plea to the British Government to be permitted to live there several years—forever if my brother wishes it. Let it be clearly understood that I demand no special privileges for myself that would be contrary to the routine established there. I will accept without complaint all the restrictions imposed upon my brother.' And here is a copy of what Jerome wrote to the Prince Regent: 'For reasons entirely apart from political considerations I anxiously desire to pass several months at St. Helena. The sentiments which inspire this desire must be familiar to Your Royal Highness; they are only those of devotion and love for a brother who was for so long a time both father and protector to me. I feel certain that affection and respect will in some small way modify the rigors of his captivity. At least I should like to have the opportunity of proving to him that we all think of him only as an object of love and veneration.' And Catherine added her pleas to her husband's in a personal letter in which she called attention to the fact that she and the Prince Regent were linked by the blood of the House of Brunswick, a fact which should influence him in granting their request. Elisa has also informed Las Cases that, in spite of her young children needing her, she is ready to make any sacrifices that would soften her brother's fate. Even Hortense has written him that she is sustained in bearing her persecutions by the thought that they are the result of her devotion to the Emperor. So, you see, my dear sister, Las Cases knows what is in the heart of each of us; and he is doing everything in his power to help us. It would be most unwise for us to insist upon anything that would complicate the situation. If the Emperor felt it was possible for you to come to him, he would have written you long before this."

"He has already written. I am sure of it. These vile stroz-

zini in authority have destroyed his letters so that they would not reach me. It is not like Nabulio to let months, years, pass without sending me some message in his own hand."

Fesch's patience was without end. "Las Cases has explained all that to us. Have you forgotten what he wrote about the reception of your first letter by the Emperor! Before it reached his hands it had been opened many times, read by every official along the route, soiled by hundreds of hands, so desecrated that its reception caused him only pain. Ratner than have his private thoughts to you thus desecrated, he prefers to send you messages only by word of mouth. It seems to me that his sensitiveness is easy to understand."

Letizia was implacable. "No matter how many had read his words—if they could read his beloved scrawl, and I don't believe many could—they would mean everything to me. Just to know that I held in my hand something he had touched would be infinite joy. Do not try to persuade me that it is not best for me to go to him. I have never failed one of my children yet. My whole life would count as nothing if I do not go to Napolione. If Lucien or Jerome receive permission to go, I will go with them. Let us not discuss this any longer. Sometimes I find your caution unbearable."

But neither Lucien's nor Jerome's pleas were answered. The British authorities were consistently opposed to any member of the family going to St. Helena; and the European sovereigns showed no interest or inclination in interfering with this decision. Europe, the whole world, had apparently dismissed all thought of the man who had so recently ruled over them. Once conquered and imprisoned in a spot practically without communication, he was considered out of the way and relegated to oblivion.

The relief caused by the first tidings from the distant

island began, through long months of waiting, to fade into anxiety. Every step toward more direct communication appeared futile. Yet not for one moment did Letizia's courage flag. On the contrary her energy seemed to increase with every mounting obstacle. Each time she reread Las Cases' letters she became fired with determination. The words were before her day and night.

"The Emperor's health, when I left, was far from good. He was showing a disposition to suffer from an affection of the liver. The house at Longwood is built upon the ground. During the frequent tempests the rooms are deluged with water. He needs medicines, special foods, the comforts to which he is accustomed and which are impossible to find there. The governor, Sir Hudson Lowe, shows no sympathy for his condition. The Emperor's parting words to me show convincingly his moral state: 'My body is now in the hands of my enemies. They forget nothing that will gratify their vengeance. They are killing me inch by inch. But Providence is too just to permit my sufferings to continue long. The poison of this devouring climate, the want of everything that makes life bearable, will soon put an end to my existence.' "

When Barry O'Meara, an Irish physician attached to the British fleet and sent to accompany the Emperor on the *Northumberland* to St. Helena, was recalled on account of Hudson Lowe's complaint that he was showing too much sympathy for the prisoner, Letizia's anxiety changed swiftly to agonized fear. O'Meara's report to the British Admiralty was alarming. Napoleon was ill. The affection of the liver had made it impossible for him to continue his sole exercise—riding. Deprived of all distractions, he was now leading a sedentary existence that would soon prove fatal. "I believe that his life will be endangered if he remains much longer in such a trying climate, especially as his health

suffers materially from the restrictions and annoyances to which he is constantly subjected and to which his malady renders him peculiarly sensitive." The necessity of sending immediately another physician to take his place was urged by O'Meara. His report ended with the statement that the Emperor had expressed a desire to be accorded the comfort of a priest—there being none of his faith on the island.

Letizia heard this report with mingled emotions. The alarm over the health of her son was somewhat softened by the profound satisfaction of knowing that he at last had come to an appreciation of the comforts of religion. She spent hours reading a paragraph from one of Las Cases' letters—words which Napoleon had dictated himself. "The religion of every civilized race is worthy of our respect. We Christians have the advantage of having taken our creed from the purest moral sources. As it is an obligation to respect the religious beliefs of others, so is it a double duty to respect our own. Each of us should live and die in the faith taught us by our mothers. Religion is a part of our destiny; it creates for us, together with the laws and customs of our world, everything that is sacred to us—above all that patriotism which we should never forsake." She felt that these words assumed an even greater significance now that they were followed by a request for the companionship of a priest; and she immediately sent a copy of the excerpt to the Pope with the hope that this new exposition of faith would lead the Father of Christendom to make a public gesture of sympathy for the exile. Her hope was not unfounded. A week later she received a letter from Cardinal Consalvi enclosing a copy of a communication sent by the Holy Father to the British Regent. "The mother of the Emperor Napoleon has brought to our attention the fact that the rock of St. Helena is a mortuary situation and that the unhappy exile is slowly dying there. We have learned

this with infinite sorrow and pity; as it will undoubtedly be received by His Royal Highness. We must both remember that, after God, it was principally Napoleon who devoted himself to the re-establishment of religion in the kingdom of France."

Encouraged more than she had been for many months, Letizia then asked permission for Abbé Buonavita, who had been her almoner at Elba, to be allowed to come to her. She had thought of him as being the most suitable priest to send. But upon his appearance she realized that the passing years had been unkind to him. He was old and decrepit, a far from stimulating companion for her son in either temporal or religious discussions. With him, however, was a young priest, Vignali, who expressed so much devotion and admiration for the Emperor, that she decided to send him also. His youth and spirit and evident learning would be a stimulating antidote to Buonavita's senility.

While she made all the necessary arrangements for the departure of the two priests, ordered a special altar built which they could carry with them, and had numerous boxes packed with candles and sacerdotal objects, she sent her brother and chamberlain from one authority to another to find out who was the best physician available to go to St. Helena. Fesch decided that a Doctor Francesco Antommarchi, a Corsican famous for researches made in the hospital at Florence, was the most responsible man to be found. But he feared that it would be impossible to persuade him to undertake such a long journey.

"A true Corsican would not hesitate a moment," Letizia exclaimed. "He would welcome the opportunity to serve his Emperor and compatriot. If it is a question of money tell him I will pay whatever he demands. Send a courier for him at once."

When the evening for their departure came—Buonavita,

Vignali, and Antommarchi—she invited them, with her three children then in Rome, to an elaborate banquet. The Palazzo was brilliantly lighted for the first time since she had entered it. Candles were seen at every window. Flowers everywhere gave a gay note to the surroundings. And before the guests left for their long journey she gave each one of them a written list of instructions. She insisted upon being sent regularly detailed accounts of the Emperor's health, his daily life, his most casual words.

With the departure of the little caravan, she drew a long breath of relief. Every one sent by her to that distant rock brought her closer to her son.

"If you see my son, embrace him for me; and tell him never to forget he was born a French prince."

These words, quoted in one of Las Cases' letters to her, drove Letizia, at the sacrifice of much pride, into sending several couriers to Parma with the request that her grandson be permitted to make her a visit. Her letters were never answered. And when she learned that the Emperor Francis had signed a decree declaring that his daughter, the Archduchess Marie Louise, was the mother of a male child—whose name was not mentioned—to whom was to be assigned the rank, the title, and the name of the family, she realized that any further attempts at relations with Marie Louise were futile. "In truth," she said to Pauline, who had brought her the news, "we are at last revenged upon the house of Austria. I never imagined that, in giving his daughter to my son, the Emperor had consented to her being his mistress and not his wife." Then her anger quickly softened into pity for her grandson. "Alas, poveretto—they have deprived him of the most beautiful name in the world. The title of Duke of Reichstadt is nothing; the name of Napolione Buonaparte will resound forever across the world."

A constant comfort during these months and years of anxiety was the satisfaction of seeing all her economies and investments, made at the time of great success and glory, increase beyond her expectations. Financial discussions with her brother occupied a good part of her days. The banker Torlonia was often called in to talk over investments with her. With his advice she made many safe loans, one among others being to the Holy Father himself, who borrowed from her half a million francs to make sanitary improvements in the Papal States. Her rapidly mounting income made it possible for her to help Lucien and Pauline, both of whom were experiencing financial difficulties; but she invariably made them sign promissory notes for the amounts advanced. And when she felt they were able to return to her the sums loaned, she made them live up to their obligations. She was willing, even happy to help them —that was the purpose of her fortune; but she was firm in not encouraging them in foolish extravagances. Besides, there was no telling at what moment Napoleon might need every sou she could lay her hands on. When such a time came she did not wish to be hampered in meeting his request. And year by year his needs became more and more exigent. At the least suggestion of a desire expressed by him in letters from his companions at St. Helena, she would expedite cases without a moment's delay. The preparation of things to be sent him—books, medicines, clothes, food—aroused her to a pitch of enthusiasm beyond any other interest. To Joseph, who had established himself in America, bought a country estate, Point Breeze, on the banks of the Delaware, and was acquiring a fortune by speculating in real estate, she wrote many letters filled with business details.

"With regard to the Emperor, his fixed and necessary expenses have now mounted to five hundred pounds sterling

a month. This sum is sent to him, on his order, from the deposit made by him with a bank in Paris during his sojourn at Elba. These five hundred pounds have been sent to him regularly each month—with the exception of one occasion when, through the fault of the banker, a note of exchange for seventy thousand francs was protested. I paid this sum myself and since then have heard no more of the matter. The regular expenses which I have assumed—to send him wines, coffee, clothes, books, medicines, ornaments for his chapel, and the travel expenses of the two priests, the physician Antommarchi, a cook, a maître d'hôtel, valet, etc.—have amounted to about one hundred and eighty thousand francs, including the sixty-five thousand francs I sent direct to Las Cases. Beyond this, I am constantly sending him things which, as you know, is the only joy left me. Lucien, with his numerous family, can do nothing. He has already put up for sale his palace in Rome and his villa at Frascati and has established himself at Viterbo, where he now lives and manages his Canino estates. Jerome, who is in perfect health, is now residing with Catherine at Trieste. They are expecting another baby. On account of his great financial losses I have felt it necessary to send him even greater sums than I have yet sent the Emperor. Pauline, in spite of her extravagances which she provides for through the sale of many of her objets d'art, still enjoys an income of seventy thousand francs. From her dot and amounts she has placed at interest she receives forty thousand francs. Besides this, she has several millions in claims against the French government—but this, as you know, is entirely a question of conjecture. She complains all the time of exceeding her budget, but as her budget is only observed when it pleases her, I never take it very seriously. Louis lives comfortably, though I do not know from what sources he derives his income. As for myself, you have no idea what economies it

is necessary for me to practise. The unusual expenses which I have already mentioned to you and those which I have not mentioned, have recently been increased by the loss of funds due to political events. This loss, however, and the purchase of this palace in which I live, have been balanced by the sums I received from the sale of my house in Paris and the property at Pont. The three thousand pounds which I have asked you to return to me are destined to meet any unusual expenses which may arise. It is evident that you and I must sacrifice many of the comforts to which we are accustomed—unless Providence soon comes to our aid."

In the midst of a deepening conviction that all her efforts were coming to naught, Letizia's depression was increased by the news of Elisa's death—the first one of her children to be claimed by death. Though she had not seen this daughter for more than six years, her death at Trieste, where she had been living since her exile from France, came as a severe shock. Though Elisa had never been so close to her as Pauline, she had always admired her seriousness, her superior intelligence, even her arrogance. Like Lucien, her inclinations had always led her toward a study of literature, science, the arts. But grief at her death was quickly silenced when Letizia learned that Fouché was visiting her at the time. She never again mentioned her name—as she had never mentioned Caroline's since her betrayal of Napoleon in Naples. "Treason and treachery are the characteristics I abhor most. In my own children they are doubly unpardonable." Yet she did not fail to send a letter at once to Napoléone, Elisa's young daughter, counselling her in her characteristic way: "Naturally you will feel deeply your mother's death; but you must realize that such a loss is not irreparable. Your mother will pray for you and through her prayers you will receive that divine grace which will

console you in your affliction and direct you in the proper path to follow. I wish it were possible for me to be near you, to aid you through my experience and to instil in you the principles which should influence all the children of my family. I look forward to the time when you and your brother can come to me."

Pauline's lack of health was another source of constant anxiety. She appeared each year to grow more and more frail. And yet it was impossible to influence her. The moment she had been benefited by a cure she plunged with renewed abandon into social excitements which left her exhausted. For months she had been unable to put her feet to the ground; and only left her Villa Paolina for a few hours each day, either in a carriage or carried about in a sedan chair.

And the letters from Antommarchi from Longwood contained little from which encouragement could be drawn. Also they were months old before they arrived. One would describe the Emperor's condition as better; another would state that the climate made it impossible to hope for any material change in his health. In one letter he quoted Napoleon's words as an example of the depths of discouragement from which he suffered. "I am most grateful to you, dear doctor, for the care you are giving me; but if my hour has sounded—if it has been decreed from above that I must perish—neither you nor all the physicians in the world can change this decision." And when Antommarchi had tried to encourage him with hope, he had exclaimed: "Hope, yes, it is the very best medicine you can give me!"

Hope. Letizia repeated the word constantly to herself. Had not hope—and prayer—been her stronghold during the six years that had passed without seeing her son! And yet what was there now left to hope for! Sometimes she felt that death was the only escape for her son—and for her-

self. It would surely end their torment. Was it not better to be freed from a world that had shown itself so cruel, so inhuman, so base! But these moments of despair were short lived. She had never admitted defeat; she would not now —though every channel of succor seemed to be closing relentlessly about her. When Abbé Buonavita returned from St. Helena, driven away by the evil effects of the climate and bringing only mournful reports with him, Letizia was spurred once more into sending beseeching letters to those who held the fate of her son in their hands. To Lord Liverpool she wrote an appeal that came from the depths of her heart. "Will you destroy my last hope by holding my son a prisoner on that desolate rock!" To Lord Holland she expressed her profound appreciation of all he had done and pled with him to renew his efforts. To the British Parliament she dictated a long statement made up of all the reports she had received concerning the Emperor's condition. "At least," she cried, "it cannot be said that they were ignorant of what my son was suffering by negligence on my part. I have placed the truth before them and before the whole world. If England refuses to spare my son's life, its flag, its glory, its honor will be disgraced forever; its noble traditions will be trampled in the mire of dishonor." Casting all pride aside, she wrote to Marie Louise and demanded that she use every means in her power to aid her. "In spite of politics you are in a position to make yourself heard. Surely the Allied sovereigns are powerful enough to guard the Emperor in Europe, in a climate that will not murder him, in a place where baths, medical attention, constant care will restore his health. His cry for help has given me renewed strength and increased my forces so that I shall continue to struggle for his salvation. The voice of a despairing mother still sounds throughout the world. You cannot refuse to help me. No matter what your sentiments now are,

you can never forget that my son was your husband and the father of your child."

When the heat of the early Roman spring became intolerable, Louis insisted that his mother go with him to his villa at Albano. The garden would be refreshing; the view over the Pontine Marshes toward Monte Circeo was very beautiful; the breeze from the sea would be invigorating. Pauline had promised to spend a month with them. And Cardinal Fesch would drive out every few days to fetch any tidings that might arrive.

Letizia was at last persuaded to leave Rome, though protesting that she felt she was relinquishing closer contact with her exiled son. Letters would take at least one day longer to reach her. But she admitted, seated in the grateful shade of ilex groves, that the change was beneficial. There was something of Corsica in the scene—in the sable cypresses, the silver olives, the vista of bare, dramatic mountains. Spring in Italy was very much the same as in Corsica. Yes—it was calm and peaceful away from the constant murmur that rose from the Piazza Venezia. One's thoughts had more freedom in the country; they soared unrestrained over unlimited horizons—across vast waters.

"What day is it, Pauline?"

"Monday, Maman."

"No, I mean the day of the month."

"The fifth of May."

"And the year?"

"Eighteen twenty-one. Why do you ask, Maman?"

Letizia's hands lay idly in her lap. Her eyes were fixed steadily on the distant strip of sparkling Mediterranean. "I dreamed last night—the first time I have dreamed in a long, long period. I suppose my days have been too filled with dreams for any to be left for the nights. But—last night——"

The Mother of Napoleon.

After a drawing by her granddaughter, Princess Charlotte.

Pauline pressed her hand, then raised it to her lips. "You dreamed of Napoleon, povera Mammina?"

Letizia nodded. "Of him—yes. But I did not see him. It was some one else—a man I had never seen before—a vague figure—almost a shadow. I could not make out his features."

"Where was it, Maman? Where did you see him?"

"It was in the Palazzo in Rome. I was sitting by the window. Rosa was reading to me. My brother was beside me. Saveria came in and said a stranger was at the door. The portiere had refused to let him enter, but the man was so prepotente, so insistent, that he would not leave. He said he had an important communication to make to me. When asked his name he said he would tell it to no one but me. I told her to bring him to me. When he had entered he bowed low before me, then glanced at Rosa and my brother. Without having spoken I saw at once that he wished to speak to me without the others—so I told my brother and Rosa to wait in the next room, but within call. When we were alone he came very near to me and spoke in a low voice. 'I have come to tell you, Signora Letizia, that Napolione has at last been delivered from all his sufferings—that he is now happy.' At this moment he thrust his hand into his coat in such a way that I feared he was reaching for a dagger. But it was a crucifix he brought forth. He held it toward me. 'Kiss the redeemer and saviour of your beloved son. After many long years you will see him again—your son who has been the object of your profound suffering, the one whose name has resounded through the smallest hamlets as well as the great cities of the world. But before the day of your reunion, many changes will have taken place in France. There will be civil wars. Floods of blood will be spilled. The whole of Europe will be in flames. But Napolione will return to subdue this strife and once more rule over France

and the whole world. This is the great work for which he has been chosen by the King of Kings to accomplish.' " Letizia's voice died away on the stillness of the garden. For a long time the silence was broken only by Pauline's gentle sobs. "He seemed to me to be a prophet, Pauline," Letizia began again, very softly, almost a whisper. "A prophet inspired by God and sent to a poor mother to announce to her His immutable wishes regarding the fate of her son."

Pauline laid her head in her mother's lap. "Mammina mia! If it will comfort you, let us think of this dream as a message of hope. Let us try to think that Napoleon will soon be released and return to us."

Letizia's hand rested on her head. "If his sufferings are ended, I shall ask for nothing more. Do not weep, figlietta mia. See. My eyes are dry. I shall weep no more. Why should we weep—if Napolione is happy."

And as the quiet spring days lengthened into summer, she never once showed a disposition to weep. Placid calm seemed to have taken possession of her. She sat for hours in the garden, silent and peaceful—almost happy—surely undisturbed by the harassing thoughts which had driven her on and on ever since she had been in Rome. The extraordinary energy seemed at last to have burned down into ashes. She was like a magnificent ship that had reached a sheltered harbor, furled its sails, and settled down to a long-sought rest.

Even when her brother came to her, two months later, to announce the tidings of death which had finally come to the suffering exile, she did not weep. She listened to the fatal words without making a sound or a movement. In some way she suggested that she was already prepared and resigned for the blow. Her words, when she finally spoke, were only a request to be left alone.

Later that evening she sent for her brother. "Where is Napolione? Are they bringing him to me?"

Fesch tried to draw her into his arms; but she held him off as if sensing some evasion in his gesture.

"Have they left him on that desolate rock?"

Fesch bowed in silent assent. "They have refused to let us move him."

Letizia stared at him; the color rushed violently into her pallid face; her eyes flashed; her head lifted with the old imperious gesture. "Send Rosa to me. Tell her to bring paper and ink. Before I withdraw forever from the world there is one more task left me."

And all through that night, she sat dictating a letter to the Marquis of Londonderry, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Great Britain.

"The mother of the Emperor Napoleon claims from his enemies the body of her son. She requests that you present her claim to the Ministers of His Britannic Majesty and to His Majesty himself. Having fallen from the highest pinnacle of glory to the profoundest depths of human misery, I shall not attempt to recall to the British Ministry the sufferings of their noble victim. Who could possibly be more familiar with the agonies of the Emperor than the governor of St. Helena and the Ministers whose orders he carried out! Nor is there anything left to be said to the mother about the life and death of her son. Inexorable history is already guarding his grave; and both living and dead, peoples and kings, will be forced equally to submit to its inevitable judgment. Since the most ancient days, even among the most savage nations, hate has never extended beyond the tomb. Can it be possible for the Holy Alliance to show the world another proof of its heartlessness! Can the British Government consider for a moment continuing to extend its iron arm over the body of its dead enemy! I demand the remains of my son. No one has the right to them before a mother. Under what pretext can they be

kept from me? The rights of states and politics have no claim upon an inanimate body. What would be the reasons for denying my request? If the object is to outrage the dead body of the hero, such a deed would strike horror to every one who has a soul. If it is for the purpose of expiating, by tardy honors, the unjust agony perpetrated on that desolate rock, I shall protest with all the force left in me against such a step. Such a step would be, in my eyes, a despicable outrage. My son has no need of honors to be conferred upon him by the British Government; his name is sufficient glory; and as for Great Britain—the memory of the crimes committed by it against my son will endure centuries after its power has crumbled into the dust. I alone have the right to embrace what remains of my son. I shall prepare his tomb in a humble chapel far from all disturbing noises. In the name of justice and humanity, I beseech you not to refuse my prayers. It is in order to be given permission to send for the remains of my son that I now address my pleas to the Ministry and to His Britannic Majesty. I gave Napoleon to France and to the world. In the name of God, in the name of all mothers, I now ask that he be returned to me."

III

When, late that autumn, Letizia came down from the Alban hills and re-entered the Palazzo Bonaparte, it was with the deep conviction that the only comfort that remained to her would be found in complete retirement and constant prayer. "I shall forget the world. There is no longer any happiness in it for me," she said, when she was alone in her room with Saveria. "Draw the curtains. I have no further need of sunlight. Tell them to close the great portal on the Corso. I wish no carriages to stop before the palace. I will see no one but my children. My mourning will be eternal."

Pleas of her brother, advice of physicians, arguments from her children, nothing availed against this decision. The only concession she ever made to their insistence was to drive each day in a closed carriage to the Pincian hill and spend an hour there walking in the shade of the dim ilex grove. To the many requests of visitors who wished to pay their respects to the mother of Napoleon—and there were many from France and even more distant countries—she invariably sent a gracious but firm refusal. She had never been a part of the great world; why should she not, in her old age, be left undisturbed in her mournful thoughts and prayers? The sound of light words and laughter in her house was an outrage to her grief; they were sacrilege. Even when her children came to see her—and brought their children with them—she imposed a régime of low voices and noiseless movements that no one dared break. Dressed in a simple black merino gown, her face pallid, her dark eyes expressive of profound sorrow, she received them with few words and silent caresses. Not even when Jerome and Catherine, finally released from official restrictions, had

come to live in Rome so as to be near her, was the spell of gloom lifted. She appeared beyond all trivial interests. Her days were given over entirely to unbroken periods of thought. She could not, and did not wish to, break the chain of memories that bound her to the son who, through martyrdom, had become much more living to her than those about her. But she was not indifferent to what she still considered her duty. When her children were not with her, she constantly sent them letters; when they were with her she listened attentively to the recountal of their trials and difficulties—no matter how trivial their complaints might sound. She showed interest in the marriage arranged between Lucien's son and Joseph's daughter; she even made valuable suggestions about the proper dot and their mode of living. She invited each of her grandchildren to spend a few weeks with her each year; she welcomed Julie and Hortense, when they were permitted to come to Rome, with affectionate greetings; and it was she alone who finally persuaded Pauline to become reconciled with her husband and go to live with him in Florence—though this robbed her of the one last ray of sunshine that was left her and separated her forever from her youngest daughter.

As the years dragged on, she found her most comforting thoughts did not centre any longer about the period of glory—that seemed to have disappeared into the abyss of forgotten things—but to concentrate on the days when, following her husband into mountains, through forests, across rivers in the wars of Corsican liberation, she had carried her son of battle beneath her heart; and also days when she had held him in her arms, nursed him at her breast, taught him to put one foot before the other and make steps forward—steps that were to lead him toward such a stupendous future.

And still the years dragged on and on. Twenty-one had

now passed since she had bidden her son farewell at Malmaison; fifteen since the fatal tidings had come from St. Helena.

"Death has forgotten me, Saveria. I am old, forlorn, feeble. Why must I go on living! My son has fallen from the greatest height and died miserably far from me. All my children—those who are left—are exiles, subjected to insults, guarded like criminals. My eldest son has crossed the ocean to be with me and is still refused the privilege of affording me a last farewell. One by one I see them disappear: Elisa—Napolione—Pauline. Why, at least, could Pauline have not been spared me! She was so young, so beautiful, so light-hearted. Death should not have chosen her and passed me by. She would have been like sunlight to my sightless eyes. Even my grandchildren seem fated to fade before me. You did not hear what Count Prokesch recounted to me the other day, Saveria! He came to tell me about the King of Rome. He thought to allay my fears by telling me he was well and strong. But I read between the words. He is dying. They are killing him by withholding from him everything he craves. They have taken his father's name from him. They have forbidden him to be called Napolione the Second. And yet France wants him—has called him —and he cannot go. He is dying, Saveria, and I shall never see him. That kiss at Blois, when they took him from my arms, was the last I shall ever give him. But I sent him my benediction and a little gift—Prokesch promised to put it into his hands—that lacquered box of checkers, each marked with an N, which his father had used during the days of his agony. But I will not weep. I will still hold my head high. No one will ever be able to say that the mother of the Emperor Napolione was bowed down by grief or that she would have changed places, even now, with the first queen in the world."

Saveria, bent and feeble, shook her head and mumbled words that were difficult to hear. "The Signora Madre has many children left her."

"But they do not need me. He—Nabulio—did. And I failed him. He is the only one I ever failed. I did not go to him. They would not let me. Nor will they give me what is left of him. His last cry rings continually in my ears: 'I wish my ashes to rest on the banks of the Seine among the French people whom I have so dearly loved.' Why will they not grant a dead man's wish!" She put out her hand and caressed a small iron bed that was placed close to her chair. "Think of the dreams, Saveria, he must have had when he threw himself upon this bed. It was his companion in every great campaign. When I touch it I feel that he is very near me. And when you fetch me chocolate on this tray—the one which served him on that desolate rock—I hear his voice crying to me to save him. And yet I failed him—I failed him."

"Vergogna, Signora! The Imperatore would not like to hear you speak such words. Did he not say himself that he owed all his glories to you! And is not all his glory returning! The Signore Cardinale told me they had placed his statue once more on the great column in Paris."

Letizia's hands pressed tightly together. "If I could only see it! If I could only go to Paris and see his likeness there! But I can see nothing any longer, Saveria. I could not see the face of Jerome's son when they brought him to me the other day. I had to feel his features. But I knew they were Buonaparte; I knew that as soon as I had touched them. It was a comfort to welcome him to my house. And it gave me a chance to send words to his mother in that distant country—words that have been in my heart for many years —words of regret for the wrong I did her. It was I who robbed her of the right to sit upon Jerome's throne. I let

them convince me it was for political reasons—reasons of state—reasons of dynasty. Where are all such reasons now!"

The shadows crept closer and closer; and yet life still claimed her. Blind, crippled from a fall while walking on the Pincian hill, confined to her bed, deprived of the faithful Saveria, who had joined those who had gone before her, she still lived on, comforted only by the constant attentions of her devoted brother and visits from Jerome, Louis, and Lucien.

But there were still thrilling moments left her. With the curtains drawn across the scene of departed Roman glories, the candles lighted, and the inanimate portraits and busts of kings and queens about her, she listened by the hour to Rosa Mellini's voice as she read the words her son had spoken of her.

"My mother is worthy of every veneration."

"It is to my mother and her high principles that I owe my fortune and everything good that I have accomplished."

"My mother is a woman of great virtue and ability. But, like all mothers, she did not love her children equally. Pauline and I were her favorites. Pauline, because she was the most beautiful and the most gracious; I, because, perhaps by one of those instincts of nature, she felt I would be the creator of the glory of her race."

"My excellent mother is a woman full of courage and talent. She possesses a man's character. She is proud and noble. I owe practically all my success to the way she brought me up. She is an exceptional woman. I offered her great sums to spend upon herself. She only accepted them with the understanding that she could save them. This showed great foresight on her part. She had a horror of finding herself without anything. She had known poverty

and could never forget the terrible days of uncertainty. Though she was called avaricious and stingy, she never refused to help her children when they needed money. When I returned from Elba she gave me everything she possessed; and after Waterloo, she was ready to put everything into my hands to re-establish my affairs. She said she would willingly live on black bread if that would help in any way. At great moments she always forgot the little things of life. Pride and ambition made everything else insignificant to her."

"My mother is unique among women."

On the last day of the Roman carnival, when the Corso was thronged with masked revellers and the air was filled with gay confetti and the careless laughter of pierrots and columbines and punchinellos, the great portal of the Palazzo Bonaparte was unbarred and thrown open. From out of its shadows appeared a few priests, chanting and holding lighted candles in their hands; behind them came a funeral-car which contained a coffin covered with black velvet embroidered with silver eagles; close upon this followed a small group of mourners—hardly more than twenty men and women—all clad in black. For a few moments the little procession hesitated, as if blinded by the dazzling sunlight and incapable of making its way through the joyous throng. It was finally decided to avoid the noisy thoroughfare and seek refuge in one of the narrow, deserted side-streets. At last, unnoticed by passers-by, except those who through habit stopped long enough to remove hats and make the sign of the cross—a gesture due any dead—the church of San Luigi dei Francesci was reached. Here no special decorations were in evidence; there was no display of imperial arms; the service for the dead was of the simplest—a service that would have been said for the humblest

who had died in the faith. Later that evening, while the city was still ringing with laughter and the carnival had reached a delirium of gaiety, the little procession—still only perfunctorily noticed—made its way through the gates of Rome and out to the rapidly darkening Campagna. It was the beginning of a journey that was to lead ultimately to a small island in the Mediterranean. Such was the request of the woman who was being borne so silently into the night and whose last words had been:

"I bequeath my heart to Corsica."